MATURE WOMEN ENTRANTS TO TEACHING:

A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This is an ethnographic study of student teacher socialization located in a college of higher education. Drawing upon Lacey's research on teacher socialization, the study examines the processes of change and adaptation which a group of twenty-five mature women students underwent during their first year of a four year, B.Ed course. The research approach sits firmly within the qualitative paradigm and employs participant observation, interviews, life history methods and an interactionist perspective to further understanding about how mothers and wives learn to become students.

A central feature of the study is the use of the concept of social strategy to explain change, particularly in relation to the way in which the women manage the demands of academic and family responsibilities. The construction of adaptive and coping strategies arise from a tightly interwoven relationship of life history, situational, institutional and structural features. Analyses of the progressive development of strategies revealed that becoming a student teacher was differentially experienced according to material resources, biographical and historical factors. The study offers a holistic analysis of student socialization in which the complexity of adaptation is revealed through the interrelationship of gender, identity, life course, strategies and the negotiation of change. An important part of this change is the emergence of a student teacher and academic identity, both of which are perceived as highly valued, new aspects of self, as well as being a significant part of student teacher socialization.

In this hitherto under researched educational and sociological area of inquiry, the way in which biography and structure intersect with gender, reveals the uneasy blend of struggle, contestation, guilt and success which became a daily feature of the women's lives as they strove to reconcile the competing claims on their lives as mothers, wives and full-time students.

INTRODUCTION

In a paper on the influence of gender on educational research, Davies (1985) drew attention to the problematic nature of ethnographic research on women. On the one hand, the study of all-female groups may have 'freak value' thus confirming its 'strange', 'outside' status; on the other hand, studies which highlight the differences in responses between men and women, "may merely endorse their marginal/peripheral contribution to 'society'," (p.91). What was needed, she argued, was 'a plethora of studies on 'ordinary' girls and women, yet which do not treat them in isolation *but include their effects on men'* (p.91). This study meets Davies's criteria for future ethnographies on women on both counts. It is an investigation of 'ordinary' women who decide to train for primary school teaching at a relatively late point in their lives. Moreover, the women are not studied in 'isolation' but in relation to their husbands, partners and children. [1] The overall aim of the study was to uncover the processes of change and socialization which the women underwent during their first year as student teachers. However, given that most of the women in the study are wives and mothers, the processes of change and adaptation which affect them, also have an impact upon the lives of their

families. A study of mature women students which ignored the effects of changes in daily routines, the ways in which domestic roles are played out and the use of time and space for example, upon the lives of those people with whom they live most intimately, would be to offer a distorted and incomplete picture of socialization.

Understanding how and in what form change took place within and to the women as they learned to become student teachers, inevitably involved the constant traversing of both public and private spheres of lives. A range of research contexts would therefore need to be available for study in order to achieve a holistic and detailed understanding of what the experience of becoming a student was actually about and what it meant to the women. The institution in which the women received their higher education and teacher training, their experience of work, domestic lives, childhood and previous schooling were all potentially important research sites in the search for a deeper understanding about student adaptation. The research methodology chosen for the study would therefore need to be able to accommodate a range of contexts as well as take into account contributory features of biographical detail which spanned both contemporary and historical dimensions of time. In the process of conceptualising and defining the research problem some key questions helped to give it an initial shape and focus. Why had the women

decided to take up teaching when they did? How had previous events in their life history shaped and influenced this decision? How far had their own schooling offered or denied opportunities for further education and a career in teaching? What were their perceptions and reactions to their first days in college as a full-time student? How did they cope with the combined pressures of academic work and family responsibilities? Had they found strategies which eased the pressures at home and at college? And if so, what were they and what factors had influenced them? These and other questions formed the basis of a series of semi-structured interviews which constituted the predominent 'field method' (Burgess, 1985) used in the ethnographic case study of mature women students. Tape-recorded, individual interviews with the women at strategic points in their first year offered the kind of research tool I needed to probe the way in which processes of student adaptation were taking place and why they took the form they did, over a range of differing contemporary and historical contexts. I also believed that the women would enjoy talking about their experiences to another woman who they would meet in college as both education tutor and practioner researcher; this was an important factor in ensuring the sustained commitment of the women to the research group. The opportunity to maintain this contact through a series of 'structured conversations' (Burgess, 1982; 1984) over the year would, it was hoped, develop the

kind of relationship between researcher and researched which would lead to rich and vivid accounts of the womens' lived reality as noviciate students. The aims of this kind of interviewing were put succinctly by Palmer (1928) who believed that:

> ...they (the interviews) provide the opportunity for the researcher to probe deeply, to uncover new clues, to open up new dimensions of a problem and to secure vivid, accurate inclusive accounts from informants that are based on personal experience.
>
> (cited in Burgess, 1982, p.107).

Four interviews were conducted with each woman in the study, one during the summer just prior to their enrolment on the course and one in each of the three terms of the women's first year. Each interview had its own agenda of topics which was determined partly by the issues and events which prevailed at certain points of the year, partly by the concerns and problems identified by the women in the previous interview and by a series of directing sociological questions.

The women were also asked to keep a diary for a ten-day period in which they recorded all the tasks and activities they carried out each day from the moment they got up in the morning until the time they went to bed. The interview transcripts, diaries and a field-note journal, which I kept throughout the duration of the investigation, generated the data from which key conceptual themes emerged which were then used to analyse the socialization patterns and processes of the women in the case study.

In common with most ethnographic research the study draws on the sociological approaches of symbolic interactionism and phenomenology in order to gain an understanding of the social situation from the perspective of the women themselves. An understanding of what it felt like to become a student having spent several years in the world of work, marriage and raising a family could, I believed, only be reached through an examination of the meanings and interpretations which the women derived through interaction with others in both public and private domains. Similarly, gaining insights into their subjective understandings and knowledge of the social world (Schutz, 1967) could best be gained from careful observation of what they said and how they said it, including the non verbal features of tone of voice, body posture and facial expression. Methodologically then, the orientation of this study is mainly interpretive. I sought to interpret the womens' definition of the student experience as it changed and progressed over the year in my role as researcher and participant observer. As the data were collected, recorded and analysed, sociological themes and concepts began to be developed in order to produce a theoretical analysis which was then used to categorise and explain processes of student adaptation. This 'grounded theory' approach (Glaser and Stauss, 1967) took the commonsense and taken-for-granted knowledge used by the women which I subsequently coded and classified into social categories and

analytical concepts which made it more accessible for critical reflection. Hargreaves (1978) wrote that one of the strengths of ethnography when used in combination with symbolic interactionism, is its ability to offer '...a language for speaking about that which is not normally spoken about' (p.19). This type of sociological enquiry into educational systems and processes has a well established tradition which was initiated by the Manchester school of social anthropology and sociology (cf Gluckman, 1964). The writings of Max Gluckman and his colleagues led to a series of intensive studies by participant observation of selective secondary schools (cf Lacey, 1970; Hargreaves, 1967). Later, studies of English schools widened to include comprehensive schools, middle, primary and infant schools (Ball, 1981; Burgess, 1983; Hargreaves and Tickle, 1980; Sharp and Green, 1975; Pollard, 1985; King, 1978), respectively. The studies of secondary schools by Lacey, Ball and Burgess have been particularly influential in my own work, not only because I drew inspiration and ideas from their respective analyses, but also because I was privileged to have been taught by them at various points in my own academic life as a mature student.

Studies of student teacher socialization using this research approach, are less common, but the work of Lacey, (1977) and Stowell, (1988) relates very closely to the substantive issues and methodological

orientation of my investigation. The place of structural perspectives in the investigation has not yet been mentioned. Whilst they do not form a central part of the case study analysis, they are an important element which runs throughout the account of mature student teacher socialization. During 1991, the year of the study, the social and political context was one of unprecedented change under a right wing Conservative government. When the women in the study began their course of teacher training, major institutional changes had already been imposed upon the state education system. The impact of the 1988 Education Reform Act was beginning to work its way through schools and higher education institutions. The prescriptions and discourse of the National Curriculum had begun to form part of the lived reality of teachers, education tutors and pupils. Control of educational funding was beginning to shift away from Local Education Authorities into schools under Local Management of Schools. As the women progressed through the course they would be among the first cohorts of students to see how this change was affecting the resourcing and day-to-day administration of state schools as well as be trained to cope with all aspects of the Education Reform Act. They would also be among the first to experience retrenchment and job losses in the teaching profession as a direct result of devolved and locally managed budgets. The era of so-called Thatcherism was nearing its end in 1991, leaving

with it a legacy of far reaching and unremitting social change. House prices had soared and increasing numbers of financially over-stretched house buyers were experiencing debt and repossession. The economy continued to decline with cuts in working hours, job losses and accelerating numbers of redundancies featuring as regular items for report in radio and television news bulletins and the national press. The impact of a market forces ideology on the funding of welfare services had the effect of putting a price on everything from hospital beds to school inspections. The health service, now reordered into a new orthodoxy of corporate managerialism was no less immune to sweeping changes to its value system than education, as its institutions began to be informed by the entrepreneurial spirit of 'Education Ltd, Education-as-a-Business-Corporation:' (Cultural Studies, Birmingham 1991, p.ix).

To have ignored these structural features and the way in which they impacted upon the lives of the women as they learned to become student teachers, would have been negligent in a sociological enquiry whose aim was to examine patterns and processes of social change.

The background to the study

Between the years 1986 and 1991 I was Admissions Tutor to a B.Ed Course, a four year programme which led to qualified teacher status and an Honours degree. I was also a full-time tutor for teacher

education programmes. I worked in a large and diversified institution of higher education which I shall call Riverdale College. Admissions work involved me in the organisation and coordination of the selection of candidates for the B.Ed Course. Interviewing potential student teachers formed a large part of my work but a significant amount of my time was spent giving advice over the telephone and in person on such matters as the type and range of required entry qualifications, the relevance of previous work experience, the number of study hours the course would entail and the content of the course. During this time demographic trends indicated a downward turn in the numbers of school leavers and candidates in their early twenties entering higher education. In the light of a potential decline in student numbers, local mature students [2] were viewed by college management as a hitherto untapped source of student supply who would become an important group to attract for their potential to make up the predicted shortfall in student numbers. At the same time the Government embarked on a series of initiatives (DES, 1987; 1991; HMI, 1991) whose purpose was to widen access for groups previously under-represented in higher education. Mature students who had few formal educational qualifications were perceived as a key target group by the various organising bodies [3] set up by the Government with a specific responsibilty to widen access to higher education. One outcome of this

Government inititative was the proliferation of Access Courses [4] which were designed to prepare students with or without few formal educational qualifications for higher education. Data on access courses were incomplete at the time of the study but, according to an HMI report conducted in 1991, there were 593 recognised (kitemarked) access courses offering 19,000 places. Of these, 326 (55%) provided the opportunity for students to qualify to enter Initial Teacher Training, including making it possible for students to qualify at GCSE grade C, or its equivalent, in mathematics and English. Some of these courses (11.3%) of the total, specifically prepared students for the B.Ed degree. A few of these course had developed links with named institutions which could include guaranteed places on the B.Ed course for students who completed the access year sucessfully, (DES, 1991, pp 3-4).

During this time demographic trends also indicated a shortfall in teacher supply, particularly in the primary age-range. The Government response to this was to set up a series of publicity campaigns whose main aim was to positively promote teaching as a career. For example, the Government sponsored organisation, TASC (Teaching As A Career) [5], organised region wide conferences, road shows and career conventions in order to widen access into teaching whilst various 'Return to Teaching' and 'Career Break' courses were targeted at married women who had left teaching to have children or to

take up other employment. One of the consequences of the campaign to attract mature students into teaching was a gradual relaxation of entry requirements on the part of receiving institutions for mature students, especially for those candidates whose work and life experience could be said to relate to teaching children.

Concerned about a possible shortfall in student numbers and a consequent reduction in funding, Riverdale College decided to offer the facility of an advisory interview to anyone who wanted one. The purpose of the advisory interview was to provide an informal forum for the exchange of information on a one-to-one basis with an admissions or education tutor about how potential recruits could gain the necessary entry qualifications and what the course entailed. From the candidates' perspective it provided a relaxed context in which they could field questions which were pertinent to their needs. These occasions were often used by candidates as a way of 'testing the water' in order to confirm whether or not they wished to commit themselves to a full-time, B.Ed degree course. The School of Education at Riverdale College gave the advisory interview a high profile in its B.Ed publicity literature and used it as a key marketing strategy. This facility attracted a large number of interested enquirers, most of whom were mature students. As a result, an increasing amount of my time was spent conducting advisory interviews. In the first term I gave almost a

hundred such interviews. I therefore met a large number of mature candidates, most of whom were women, who appeared to enjoy the opportunity to talk about why they wanted to take up teaching to an interested female education tutor. It soon became apparent that this facility provided a rare opportunity for the women to talk about their own needs and aspirations. After a series of interested inquiries and prompts about their personal lives, recent study, work experience and previous education, I often became the recipient of a series of unfolding life stories. My interest in their life history and the events which influenced their decision to train for teaching led to the research project on which this study is based.

I decided to concentrate on mature female candidates to teaching for the following three reasons: most of the people who took advantage of the advisory interview were mature women; women formed the larger majority of students compared to men on the B.Ed Course. Indeed, during the period I was admissions tutor, females consistently represented 90 -92% of the B.Ed student population with males seldom representing more than 10% of any one year on the course. Thirdly, studies of women in institutions of higher education are relatively rare and, until very recently, (cf Edwards, 1993; Pascall & Cox, 1993), even less is known about the experiences of mature women in higher education. A study of mature women student teachers would, I

believed, make a timely contribution to sociological enquiry within the field of education.

Using qualitative research methods, I adopted a case-study approach to the study of twenty-five mature women students who enrolled on the B.Ed Course at Riverdale College in September, 1991. The group of students identified for the research study were aged between twenty-four and forty-five years of age. The women were chosen for their broad representation across age, work experience, B.Ed entry route, women who were married and unmarried and those with and without children. Two pragmatic factors further influenced the selection of the women which, once chosen were labelled, 'the research group.' One criterion for selecting the women was the timing of their firm intention to take up their offer of a place. I had to know this information by March, 1991 in order to have sufficient time to write to them all, gain their consent to become members of the research group as well as agree to be interviewed in their homes or at college once before enrolment between May and August, 1991. Secondly, I needed to ensure that the women in the study lived within a reasonable distance of Riverdale College. I already had a long journey to and from the institution every day and, given that the research project was not funded in terms of money or time, I could not afford to add significantly to the amount of time I would spend travelling to and from

the womens' homes for the first interview.

Twenty-eight women initially agreed to become members of the research group all of whom were subsequently interviewed in the summer period immediately prior to enrolment. By the time the women enrolled for the B.Ed Course in September, 1991, three had dropped out of the group. One decided not to enter teaching and enrolled for a BA course instead at the same institution. Another failed the mathematics statutory entry requirement and a third failed her Access course. Twenty-five of the group formally enrolled on the B.Ed Course. By the end of the first term, two more women had withdrawn from the Course. One because her mother-in-law on whom the student was dependent for child care arrangements, became terminally ill and the second withdrew for reasons of ill health. This left twenty-three in the group, all of whom survived the first year of the Course, (see appendix 1 for a brief biographical description of each of the women involved in the case study).

The Interviews

Each of the interviews had its own separate agenda of topics to be discussed, (see appendix 2 for the four agendas and a table showing the relationship of the interviews to the terms of the year and the salient events within them). Only the first interview was constructed from my own questions and topics; the remaining three were based largely upon

issues and questions which were identified by the women in preceding interviews as being of interest and concern to their own development as student teachers.

The first interview focused on the women's biographical accounts of the life events which had influenced and led to their decision to train for teaching. The key question was, why now? What were the factors which let to the act of applying for a place on a course of teacher training? This question was pivotal in the interview insofar as it prompted the women to look back into their past lives and forward into the future in search of a response. These accounts often took the form of an unfolding life history in which hopes, dreams and disappointments were recounted with animation and intensity. An understanding of the women's respective life course in terms of its influence upon the decision to teach and the pattern of student teacher socialization became an important, interconnecting theme of the study.

The second interview was conducted during the first six weeks of the Autumn term. The questions and topics focused upon the women's initial experience of becoming a student. What were their perceptions and reactions to the first days and weeks as full-time students? Had their experience so far matched the expectations, hopes, fears and anxieties expressed in the first interview? The investigation at this point was concerned to understand the processes of adaptation from the

student's perspective. Participant categories of explanation were sought which would describe the student experience in terms of their own subjective understandings and meanings. Early signs of change in their own behaviour, thinking and perceptions were examined and discussed. New routines at home, how and when they were tackling college assignments and indications of strategies which the women were beginning to use to cope with the combined demands of college and home, were aired and considered. The choice and use of particular adaptive and coping strategies began to emerge as a key theme in the case study.

The focus of the third interview in the Spring term was the diary which they had kept for ten to fourteen days at the beginning of the term. This helped to provide a clearer picture of the women's day-to-day reality as a student. It included detail about the range and scale of activity which they had to fit into their lives, which might have been glossed over or omitted during interviews with me. Much of the interview was taken up with their reactions to the diary and issues which arose from it. The diary helped to identify some tensions and contradictions of the student experience as it was played out alongside their roles as wives and mothers. It also served to help the women articulate the coping strategies they were now employing and how these might be different to the ones they used in the previous term. The

occasion of the first essay feedback was considered to be of paramount significance by the women; to pass was considered by many as the first, tangible sign of their successful 'rite of passage' as B.Ed students. The marks which they received either confirmed or questioned their academic self esteem. The issue of academic confidence figured prominently in this and other interviews and the notion of academic identity became a further key theme in the study.

The fourth and final interview took place half way through the Summer term after the end of year examinations and a week's block of school experience. It made demands upon the women to articulate the strategies they had used to cope with the preparation for the examinations and to consider how far they felt they had made a shift from the role of mother helper in the classroom, to that of student teacher, whilst on school experience. It was necessary to pass both examinations and the school experience in order to proceed to the second year, the former being anticipated with considerable trepidation and dread by many of the women. Coping strategies in the management of family and academic responsibility were thus considered to be of particular significance during this period. Identifying the basis upon which these strategies were selected and used was a central task of this interview as was the way in which the women negotiated change within their family lives to ensure academic success without risking too

much conflict at home. The question of whether some strategies were more successful than others and how far the choice of coping strategy was influenced by biographical, institutional and structural factors, became an important focus of this interview. So too was the issue of how far and in what ways their first year as student teachers had effected both their lives and those of their families. The types of strategies used to negotiate change in the process of student adaptation built upon the work already begun on this theme.

The development of sociological themes and concepts did not occur in the neat and tidy order which might be implied from the way they have been set down in the summaries of the four interviews. In reality, they emerged, dropped away, got taken up again and revisited throughout the year, depending on what was important both to the women at the time, alongside my concern to find a pattern and a structure in the wealth of conversational accounts which the women related to me about the changes taking place in their lives as they learned to become student teachers.

Initially, an abundance of social categories and potential themes emerged from the data but these were eventually reduced to six main themes, all of which were closely interlinked: socialization, the life course concept and gender were the overall interconnecting themes, whilst strategies, identity and the negotiation of change formed the

remaining three.

Organisation of the Thesis

So far I have described the theoretical and methodological orientation of the case study and given some contextual details about the background of the investigation, how it was set up and why mature women student teachers were considered to be worthy of study. Very little has yet been said about how the investigation relates to the larger canvas of research on women and higher education. In chapter 1 some of the contemporary issues and debates about the place and status of women in higher education as a whole are reviewed and discussed. Changes in educational opportunity and access are considered alongside the career opportunities for women academics in order to ascertain how far their position has improved or remained unequal. An overview of the more recent research is presented and the study located within a national context of research themes on women and higher education.

The argument for a case study approach to an investigation on student teacher socialization is examined in chapter 2. The key constituents underpinning 'case study' research are presented in the context of a research approach which sits firmly within the qualitative paradigm. The relationship of theoretical perspectives to the research methodology is examined in terms of other sociological enquiries in education which have features in common with my own work. My

own particular theoretical and methodological stance is discussed as is the process by which the data were categorised to form a theoretical analysis. My multi-faceted role as one-time admissions tutor, education tutor, school experience supervisor, researcher, and sympathetic woman listener whose own life history includes several years of mature student experience, brings both strengths and weaknesses to the research enterprise which are made explicit. The relationship between the researcher and the researched thus became an inextricable part of the ethnography and formed an important element in the research process which is fully acknowledged and written into the chapter. A number of ethical and feminist considerations about the moral imperatives which should guide the research when the more powerful research the less powerful and when women research other women, (cf Oakley, 1981; Burgess, 1989) are considered in relation to the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of some issues relating to the reliability and validity of the data.

Using an approach drawn from the life history method the decision to teach is considered in chapter 3 in relation to salient events in the women's lives as a whole. Factors which have influenced this decision are often rooted in childhood aspirations, early schooling and carried through into motherhood and the experience of work. The life course perspective provides a theoretical framework which takes

account of life events as they change and shift over historical and contemporary time: it provides a basis from which to explain*why* the women took up teaching *when* they did. Temporality, transitions and turning points are central concepts within this approach which are used to trace the biographical factors which led the women to the point where they took action and applied for a place on a teacher training course. The decision to teach is presented as a complex social act which cannot be reduced to a simple matter of individual choice.

In chapter 4 the first days and weeks of novitiate student status are described from the womens' perspective. Subjective understandings of what it felt like to be in an institution of higher education after years of child rearing and the world of work, are recounted using participant categories of explanation. The experience of becoming a student traverses the public world of the institution and the private sphere of the home and family; the relationship between the two is presented in terms of how the women define the situation. How the women cope and adapt to this new reality whilst sustaining their responsibilities as wives and mothers, is defined as a problematic and exhausting experience. The importance of friendship groups which later become significant reference points for the self understandings and which arise as the women begin to acquire a student perspective, is described as an early aspect of student adaptation. So too are the

initial manifestations of an emergent student-teacher identity.

The women's first perceptions of school experience are examined in chapter 5. Anticipated with pleasure and confident expectation, school placements sometimes result in contradictory and disappointing outcomes. Despite several years' voluntary or paid work in schools as classroom helpers, the women's experience and maturity is not always perceived as an advantage or strength either by the schools or the college. Ways have to be found of coping with this paradox and Lacey's (1977) concept of social strategy is used to explore the way in which the women construct strategies which enable them to adjust to the demands of the situation. The relationship between 'cue-seeking' women (Miller & Partlett, 1974) and choice of strategy is explored. Four types of school coping strategies are revealed: strategic distancing, strategic acceptance, strategic negotiation and strategic relocation of energy and interest. At this point of their adaptation, strategies are presented as transitory, context specific and strongly bound up with biographical history as well as institutional factors. Shifts and changes in the women's identity begin to emerge as they move from the role of mother helper in the classroom to student teacher.

The theme of identity is taken up again in chapter 6 and developed to include an emergent academic identity which is considered

to be a further and important part of the inchoate student teacher identity. The development of an academic identity and its relationship to increased self esteem, becomes a closely guarded part of the women's selves which they increasingly seek to protect. Potential threats to its survival by an excess of demands from the family have to be kept at bay; its importance to the women is a significant feature of their ability to negotiate change within the family. A key feature of the women's student adaptation is their ability to successfully manage the twin pressures of academic demands and family reponsibility. The pressures of examination preparation make heavy claims on this ability and the selection of coping strategies which enable the women to meet these demands is a major theme of this chapter. By this point in the year, strategies which meet survival needs are more efficient, less transcient and more stable. Three broad categories of strategy emerged: strategic compromise, strategic pragmatism and strategic task reduction. Coping strategies are not experienced homogeneously by the women. Differences in income, material and personal resources among the women crucially affect the range of strategies which they have at their disposal. Materially advantaged women thus have access to a greater range of strategies than those who are less advantaged and three broad groups of differentially resourced women are discussed. The construction of coping strategies is presented as the outcome of a

complex interplay of structural, institutional, biographical and historical factors. Changes in identity and the construction of social strategies are posited as the means by which the processes of student adaptation can be uncovered and understood.

One of the purposes of this study has been to provide an integrative analysis of student teacher socialization in which the themes of identity, gender, strategies, the life course perspective and the negotiation of change all play an interrelated part. The close-knit interconnectedness of student adaptation is illustrated in chapter 7 through a life history account of one of the women in the study. An examination of her gender specific life events and the effect they had on her experience of higher education is explored through a micro case study of her life as it was lived out in the year of the study. Some of the broader debates discussed in chapter1 on the position of women in higher education are taken up again and related to the woman student featured in the chapter.

In chapter 8 the thesis concludes with a brief review of what the experience of higher education has done for the women in the study. It summarises the achievements of the investigation and refers to those issues and questions which as yet, remain unanswered. The chapter ends with a discussion of potential directions for future research and some implications for policy and practice.

NOTES

(1) At the time of the study, 22 of the women were married and referred to their marriage partners as 'husbands' and to themelves as 'wives'. Only one women was in a relationship with a male whom she regularly referred to as her 'partner'. Of the remaining 2, one was divorced and living on her own, and the other, unmarried. To avoid the inelegant use of 'husband/partner' throughout the thesis as well as the possibility of offending the women, I have used the same titles that the women themselves used when speaking about their marriage and their domestic divisions of labour. The label,' partner' will only be used when referring to the one woman to whom this nomenclature applied.

(2) The age at which a student is said to be mature varies from 21 years to 26 years, according to Clearing Systems and University regulations. I have taken the regulations of the PCAS clearing system and the institution's validating university guidelines as my benchmark - both of which deem that 21 years is the point at which a candidate qualifies for mature student entry status.

(3) The formation of the Access Course Recognition Group in 1989, at the invitation of the Secretary of State, was a response to the growth of access courses, and stimulated further growth. In 1991 there were 39 Authorised Validating Agencies (AVAs) approved by ACRG. AVAs include universities, polytechnics and colleges of higher education membership, together with the major access course providers and further education colleges.

(4) Access courses provide the opportunity for mature adults who have few formal educational qualifications, to qualify to enter higher education. They are usually one year in length and involve up to 22 hours of study per week. Individuals also have the option to study part-time over two years.

(5) Teaching As A Career (TASC) ws set up in 1987 as a joint initiative between the Department of Education and Science, the Welsh Office and the Local Authority Associations. TASC's role is to promote and publicise teaching and teacher training to potential recruits.

CHAPTER 1

WOMEN AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN BRITAIN: AN OVERVIEW OF THEMES, ISSUES AND TRENDS SINCE 1980

Mature women student teachers are an interesting group to study for several reasons: they are products of educational deficit; beneficiaries of educational reforms designed to widen access to higher education; [1] and they are part of the only age group of students who consistently achieve more passes than men in first degree qualifications (Higher Education Statistics for the United Kingdom, 1993). (See Table 1.7, p.61). The women's success in gaining a place on a teacher training course was, at one time, a forlorn hope which few believed could ever be realised. Is their educational history of lost and gained opportunity a typical pattern of 'older', female student participation in higher education? Do their earlier doubts about entering higher education originate from subjective assessments of insufficient academic ability or are they rooted in structural factors which have historically made it difficult for women to gain access and succeed in higher education? In order to reach some conclusions about these questions the mature women's entry and experience of higher education needs to be located within a broader, national perspective on women's relationship to higher education. Some of the key themes and issues which have been a

focus for research attention in the 1980s on will be considered first. This will be followed by an overview of the recent research literature on mature women students and a discussion of the conceptual themes arising from studies of women in higher education which will be taken up and developed in this thesis.

Questions, themes and issues

Until the early 1980s research interest in women and education was mainly limited to studies of schooling, gender differentiation and social inequality (Deem, 1978; 1980; Byrne, 1978; Delamont, 1980; Spender, 1982). The question of whether the differential experience of women at school persisted at the level of higher education remained a neglected area in the sociology of education (Acker & Piper, 1984; Delamont, 1989). The volume of articles brought together by Acker & Piper (1984) provided a much needed contribution to sociological knowledge on women's participation in higher education. They also raised some important questions about equity of access between men and women and the differential career experiences of women academic employees in higher education. Although emphases vary according to the writer's particular research interest and theoretical perspective, debates on these issues have tended to focus on the following broad questions in both this volume and subsequent research studies (Edwards, 1990; 1993; Sperling, 1991; Cann et al., 1991; Thomas, 1990; Pascall

& Cox, 1993a; 1993b): Does higher education discriminate against women with respect to access? How do mature women experience higher education? What effect does it have upon their lives and those of their families? Are women academics equally represented in all grades of university, polytechnic and college hierarchies? [2]

The theoretical perspectives used to address these questions have been informed by a variety of feminist and ideological positions which have changed and developed over the last twenty years. These have ranged from a functionalist view which stressed the production of appropriately qualified people to meet the needs of the economy to one in which the problem of women in higher education was conceptualised as a moral and political debate which was concerned with principles of justice and the morality of discrimination, Acker (1984). Within this framework, philosophical and sociological discussion centred on the concepts of 'fairness', 'equality', 'opportunity' and 'discrimination'. These concepts have often generated as much political rhetoric as diversity of meanings but feminists who espoused the 'justice' view believed that bias in higher education could only be ameliorated through rational argument and sex discrimination legislation (cf Rendel, 1984; Spender & Sarah, 1982; Spender, 1984). However, as Acker (1984) among others has argued, the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 has not provided sufficient scope or legislative 'teeth' to fight for the rights of

women academics or to bring about the kind of curriculum reform which would pay greater attention to women and their contribution to scholarship.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the debate within the sociology of education shifted to a focus on theories of social and cultural reproduction which suggested that schooling played a part in reproducing the unequal and hierarchical social relations of wider society (cf Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Apple, 1982; Bourdieu, 1977). Similarly, higher education institutions also reproduced unequal social and sexual divisions of labour: for example, more men than women gained access to degree courses and women were often clustered in limited subject areas as a result of the power relations and cultural expectations of a capitalist and patriarchal society, Acker (1984). Differences in social class tended to be emphasised as the main means through which inequality was transmitted. A serious omission in 'reproduction theories' was the lack of attention paid to the part which gender relations played in the reproduction of women's responsibility for childcare, housework or, in what has become termed, 'the domestic division of labour', Acker (1984). One of the first attempts to develop an analysis of women's education which related the processes of schooling to women's position in capitalist societies came from MacDonald's seminal article on socio-cultural reproduction. She

argued that whilst the curriculum in the 1980s had become more gender-neutral, there was a hidden curriculum which continued to persuade girls towards a future in domesticity and low-paid work:

> By regarding marital and maternal roles as primary goals in life, working-class women are likely to treat work within social production as a peripheral and secondary concern. This focusing on domestic life for personal fulfilment, which is encouraged rather than discouraged by the educational system, may partially explain why women are prepared to accept employment in the worst, lowest-paid jobs within the secondary labour market.
>
> (MacDonald, 1980, p.17).

MacDonald extends her argument to include middle class girls for whom she describes school experience as 'different but no less contradictory' (p.18). Despite the ideology of equality of opportunity for both sexes, the hidden curriculum transmits a view of femininity as being synonmous with the roles of wife and mother. Even in schools where girls are encouraged to enter higher education in preparation for a professional career, they are often guided into the 'feminine' professions of medicine, education and social work, (1980, p.18). Other writers (Deem, 1978; 1980; David, 1980) have made similar points about the emphasis which schooling has placed on girls' domestic and maternal responsibilities 'since its beginnings in the nineteenth century' (David, 1980, p. 242). These feminist critiques of Marxist accounts of social and cultural reproduction through schooling, brought the issue of gender to the forefront of the debate about women's

education and its connection with future domesticity. The links between gender and class to the relations of production under capitalism, offered a structural and macrosociological account of the way in which schooling reproduced sexual inequality (Arnot, 1981). This perspective differed from the feminist writings on access and achievement which emphasised the role which socialization, discrimination, inequality and male dominance played in the perpetuation of unequal education for girls (Spender and Sarah, 1980). Acker (1984) commented on the reliance of some writers on historical and documentary sources to show the relationship of state policy to women's education (Deem, 1981; Purvis, 1981) and the struggle of women's access to university (Dyhouse, 1984). What was lacking, were studies which showed *how* the sexual division of labour was reproduced and experienced by women in institutions of higher education and whether they offered forms of resistance to the effects of 'reproduction theories' or merely remained passive victims of social and historical forces.

In the early 1980s there had been very few attempts to apply the theoretical perspectives which had been used to analyse girls and schooling, to higher education. As Acker (1984) remarked, '...when we turn to questions of contemporary higher education, we find a virtual silence about its role in reproduction of sexual inequality' (p.36).

If women are successful in gaining a place in higher education, do they continue to accept that their future will be disadvantaged in the division of domestic and paid labour? One of the problems of applying macro theories of social and cultural reproduction to the experiences of women in higher education is their tendency to offer over-determined accounts of individuals who are powerless within a predominantly patriarchal society to counter the effects of overwhelming structural forces. Dissatisfaction with the crude and simplistic interpretations of girls' experience of schooling offered by reproduction theories, led some researchers (see for example, Griffin, 1985; Anyon, 1983), to question accounts which did not include the perspectives of the girls or leave room for their own actions and definitions of reality. Their interpretations began from a belief that girls do not passively accept school definitions about femininity. Girls' experiences of education are not homogeneous and not always totally dissimilar to that of boys: more recent writing suggests that caution should be exercised before generalizing about girls' schooling experiences (Wolpe, 1988). The former determinism of the reproductive argument gradually shifted to allow more room for the dialectical interplay between individuals, schooling and structure. Discussing educational politics, Anyon argued that girls and women react with 'a simultaneous process of accommodation and resistance' (1983, p.19). Arnot (1982) reminded

us that the learning process is an active one and 'that the power of dominant interests is never total nor secure', (p.66). The central point running through these later writings is that the reproduction of gender in schools is more complex and more contested than that offered by earlier theories of social reproduction. They do not deny the pervasive effects of wider social factors upon girls, their education and their future destinies, but leave room for individuals to work out their own solutions. In a study of the linkages between school, family and work, Gaskell (1992) began from the assumption that the existing structure and relationship of schooling to the work-place in terms of preparing young people for jobs, should not be taken for granted. She, in common with Anyon (1983), took serious account of the view that the dominant ideology can be resisted and 'only selectively incorporated' (Gaskell,1992, p. 74). The young men and women in her study are presented as active and creative participants who are able to make choices for themselves. By offering an account which engages in a critical dialogue with structural theory and individual biographies, she succeeded in balancing macro and micro perspectives in a way which combined a degree of freedom with constraint:

> They do not overwhelmingly choose, or at least plan for, patterns of domestic labour that continue women's subordination in the family and in the work-place. But neither the young women or the young men are powerless in the process. They resist some aspects of it, they see through some of the inequity and they find advantages for themselves in traditional patterns.
>
> (Gaskell, 1992, p. 74).

These later theoretical perspectives were not applied to studies of women in higher education until very recently, (Pascall & Cox,1993a) and when they were, it was to expose the contradiction between reproductive structures as oppressive forces in women's lives and the actual accounts which the women in their study gave about their lives and the importance of education within them. For Pascall and Cox's mature women returners, higher education was perceived as a highly valued opportunity which held the potential to release them from domesticity into enhanced career prospects. This study looks specifically at the relationship between the education, work and domestic backgrounds of a group of mature women students in full-time higher education. Applying Boudon's (1973/4) theory of class and social mobility to the dimension of gender, they are able to raise questions about the primary and secondary effects of stratification upon girls' performance at school, work and higher education. The significance of Boudon's theory to Pascall and Cox's study lies in the scope it allows for individual decisions and rational choice to act upon and mitigate the effects of social position. The introduction of

individual effects upon structural determinants opens up the possibility for subsequent life events to alter earlier life history thus offering a more dynamic interpretation of social distance:

> ...it is important to recognise also that through life and particularly after schooling has finished, social position may itself be altered by other 'histories' joining and even displacing the original biography. For example, marriage and work may significantly change the perception of the distance that has to be travelled to reach a particular goal.
>
> (Pascall & Cox, 1993a, p.11).

The contradiction which Pascall and Cox are faced with at the end of their study is partly explained by a difference in perspective; women researchers were focused on structures whilst the women students were trying to understand their educational experience from an individual, life history perspective (1993a, p.140). The concept of life history is being used here to offer a more complete, complex interpretation of women's relationship with structure, education and gender which succeeds in avoiding the portrayal of women as ultimately complicit in their own subordination. The use of the life history dimension to explain educational and social processes is not new in sociological studies: it has been widely used, for example, to demonstrate the close interrelationship between the lives, careers and gender of teachers (cf Acker, 1989; Ball & Goodson, 1985; Sikes, Measor & Woods, 1985). However, it has figured considerably less prominently in the theorising on women's participation in higher education. A branch of the life

history method, the life course concept, figures as a key theme in my study of mature women student teachers and is used to explore the interconnections between education, family, gender and personal identity. However, one of the problems with the use of the concepts, 'life history' and 'life course' is that they are often used interchangeably with the result that they are assumed to have the same meaning and to serve the same sociological purpose (cf Allatt, et al.,1987; Bryman, et al., 1987). Both these writers make a clear distinction between the concepts, 'life cycle' and 'life course' but the point at which 'life history' meets and departs with 'life course' is blurrred. The two concepts are, of course, very closely related insofar as they both emphasise the primacy of subjective experience in understanding how people make sense of their lives in relation to their own history. Both these approaches to the study of social relations and social change use interpretive and exploratory methodologies to shed light on social patterns and processes. They also align closely with symbolic interactionism whose aim is to document the immediate lived experience of those they are studying in relation to their interaction with others. Neither approach makes claims for representativeness or generalisability which are principal objectives of a positivistic sociology. The *differences* between the two are slight, but important. The life course approach explicitly sets out to show how, in Mills's

classic formulation, the problems of biography, social structure and history intersect (1959, p.247). It is a dynamic concept which stresses the way in which individuals make transitions in the various stages of their lives in changing historical conditions. It eschews the more deterministic notion of the life cycle approach in which individuals are assumed to passively pass through life's so-called ages and stages with little power to change the course of their path through them. According to Allatt (1987) the life course 'allows for the interaction of the individual with social structures which are subject to historical change' (p.1). The use of the category, 'transition' rather than 'stage' implies that individuals have some degree of power and control over their lives and that contemporary actions will be influenced by past events. The life course concept offers a way of studying and understanding how 'people both constitute and are constituted by the socio-historical process' (Harris, 1987, p.28). It provides a way of categorising particularistic, individual historical experience in relation to the actions of others (especially family members), past and present events in personal and socio-historical time and the influence of prevailing social structures. The life history approach, on the other hand, may form a *part* of this endeavour but would not, on its own, claim to be able to bridge 'the gulf between social facts and social acts in a way that does justice to the historicity of both' (Harris, 1987, p.28).

Ultimately, however, the difference between the two concepts is probably no more than a question of emphasis. The central concern of the life history approach is to reveal the 'subjective realm' (Plummer, 1983, p.14). Thus its first concern is to locate individuals within their overall life experiences: only when this has been done, will the life historian be concerned to to contexualise the life within a broader socio-historical framwork (Faraday & Plummer, 1979). Primacy of interest is firmly anchored to the business of 'grasping personal truth' which mean that "wider 'structural' constraints may get ignored" (Faraday & Plummer, 1979, p.779). The 'truth' revealed by the life history method is immediate, particularistic and context-bound: it is therefore defined as 'a complementary method' (p.779). If wider 'truths' are required, then, according to Faraday and Plummer, other methods will need to be adopted.

This theme will be taken up again towards the end of the chapter and related to the broader themes and issues explored so far with those that will be developed in the thesis.

So far, some of the key debates and theoretical perspectives on women's participation in higher education have been introduced and three main themes have been identified: discrimination; social and cultural reproduction and its conceptual associate, the domestic division of labour. In order to examine how far these themes can be said to

account for the perpetuation of inequality and stratification among women students, they need to be set in the context of the statistical data on women's entry into higher education.

Discrimination - is there a problem?

A question which was identified earlier and which has preoccupied feminist research for several decades is whether or not higher education discriminates against women with respect to access. In the early 1980s research carried out by Griffiths (1980); Rendel (1984) and Acker (1984) indicated a slow and gradual rise in the number of women who succeeded in gaining places at universities. Since then the position for women has continued to improve with male students occupying only eleven per cent more places than female students (Social Trends, 1995, p.54). The current position for women shows a dramatic improvement when compared with the figures for 1970/71. According to data produced by Social Trends (1995) 182 thousand women were enrolled on full-time higher education in 1970/71 compared with 460 thousand in 1992/93 which represents an increase of two and half times. (See Table 1.1).

Table 1.1

Full and part-time enrolments in higher education by gender and types of establishment:

United Kingdom **Thousands**

	Males			**Females**		
	1980/81	**1985/86**	**1992/3**	**1980/81**	**1985/86**	**1992/93**
Full-time Universities						
Undergrads.	157	148	191	101	108	166
Postgrads.	34	37	48	15	17	31
Other*						
Undergraduates	120	146	245	95	129	250
Postgraduates	7	7	13	6	7	13
Total FT enrolments	318	339	496	217	261	460
Part-time						
Universities						
Undergrads.	2	5	6	2	5	9
Postgrads.	20	22	35	8	11	26
Open University	38	43	53	29	36	52
Total part-time enrolments **	207	224	262	86	125	224
All Enrolmnts	524	563	759	303	386	685

* Both full-time and part-time total enrolments include a category called 'others' which includes polytechnics, new universities and other HE establishments. ** In order to restrict data to the presentation of broad trends only, the break-down of part-time figures has been omitted from the table.

Source: Department for Education: Reproduced from Social Trends,1995, p.54.

The upward trend in the number of women gaining access to higher education increased sharply from 1985/86 onwards across all categories of higher education but it is particularly apparent in institutions other than universities. [3] (See Table 1.2, p.44). The factors which account for this marked increase in female students can only be speculatively considered at this stage, but it is likely that a combination of sex equality legislation, educational reforms designed to widen access, a move towards increasing credentialism in a precarious employment market and financial incentives [4] for institutions who significantly increased

their student target numbers, may all have had a positive effect on the numbers of women entering higher education between 1985 and 1993.

The steep rise in female students is even more marked in the case of part-time students where the numbers are nearly ten times higher in 1992/3 than in 1970/71 (Social Trends, 1995, p.54). This gain is mirrored within types of higher education institutions where, for example, the numbers of female students entering the Open University rose from 5 to 52 thousand in the same period. Indeed, the number of men compared with the number of women Open University students reached near parity in 1992/93 with men numbering only a thousand more than women. The number of female full-time postgraduate university students has doubled since 1981 when there were 15 thousand compared with 31 thousand in 1992/93. The same trend is to be found in other sectors of higher education where both men and women number 13 thousand full-time postgraduate students. Without the benefit of a detailed statistical analysis, it is not easy to be clear about the reasons which have contributed to greater numbers of female postgraduate enrolments. One possibility is that in education and health related professions where women are concentrated in large numbers in comparison to industry and other professions, the acquisition of a higher degree, at least at Masters level, is becoming increasingly common. Since the late 1980s career enhancement is now much more

likely to reside in the rapid growth in management positions in education, social services and nursing and, whilst a higher degree may not be an overt prerequisite for intending candidates, job advertisements frequently indicate the possession of one as 'desirable' or 'welcome'. A further possibility relates to the decline in funding for public services, making jobs in a range of senior and lower level management positions, less secure: as a consequence, there may be a perception on the part of women employees that a higher degree will help them to keep their jobs or at least make them a more attractive proposition for future posts, should they be made redundant. The rise in the number of part-time undergraduate enrolments may be owed partly to the decrease in Local Authority grants and employer sponsorship for part-time study at first or higher degree level. Increasingly, both men and women have no option but to combine full-time employment with study if they wish to upgrade their academic credentials. For women who continue to carry the major burden of childcare and domestic responsibilities as well as work in paid employment, part-time study may be the only route open to them to gain a first or higher degree. Another factor worthy of consideration is that the sharp increase of women undergraduates since 1986 has led to greater numbers of women who, having found fulfilment and academic success in their undergraduate study, are motivated to pursue their studies further to postgraduate level.

Is there a difference in the rise in the number of women students in universities compared with the former polytechnics and colleges? In 1986 there was a marked discrepancy between the three categories of institutions when the 15% increase in the numbers of full-time students between 1981 and 1987 was, according to Social Trends (1989), almost entirely confined to polytechnics and colleges, with university numbers remaining almost constant. During this period the numbers of women undergraduates entering university rose by approximately 5 thousand whilst those entering polytechnics and college increased by over 40 thousand. The non-university sector of higher education would seem to have borne the brunt of the rise in student numbers with a signficantly higher representation of women than in the universities. In 1992/93 this trend has broadly continued but there are indications that the gap between the university and non-university sector is slowly narrowing whilst the gap between the numbers of men and women undergraduates in polytechnics and colleges has virtually closed with a 26 per cent increase of women students over universities (Social Trends, 1995, p.55). A relatively new statistical journal, (Higher Education Statistics for the United Kingdom, 1993) offers a separate analysis of figures for universities and polytechnics and colleges respectively which makes it easier to see how the different categories of institutions compare:

Table 1.2

First year student numbers by gender, country, type of institution, mode of attendance and domicile.

United Kingdom **Thousands**

	1985			1988			1989			1990		
	M	**F**	**Tot.**	**M**	**F**	**Tot.**	**M**	**F**	**Tot.**	**M.**	**F**	**Tot.**
Universities												
Full-time												
England	40.2	27.8	68.0	41.4	31.4	72.8	43.5	34.6	78.2	45.3	37.0	82.3
Wales	1.5	0.9	2.5	1.6	1. 2	2.8	1.7	1.2	3.0	1.7	1.2	2.9
Scotland	0.7	0.5	1.2	0.7	0.5	1.2	0.7	0.5	1.2	0.8	0.6	1.4
NI	0.5	0.4	0.8	0.6	0.4	1.0	0.6	0.5	1.0	0.6	0.4	1.0
Home dom-iciled	42.8	29.7	72.5	44.3	33.5	77.8	46.5	36.8	83.4	48.4	39.2	87.6
Polytechnics and colleges												
Full-time												
England	44.3	39.5	83.7	45.6	43.9	89.5	50.2	50.7	100.9	58.5	58.1	116.6
Wales	1.7	1.3	3.1	1.7	1.4	3.2	2.0	1.7	3.7	2.2	1.9	4.1
Scotland	0.4	0.3	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.5	0.4	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.8
NI	0.5	0.4	1.0	0.7	0.6	1.3	0.9	0.7	1.6	0.9	0.8	1.7
Home domcld.	47.0	41.6	88.6	48.5	46.3	94.8	53.6	53.5	107.1	62.0	61.2	123.1

Key: M - Male; F - Female; Tot. - Total

Source: Derived from Higher Education Statistics for the United Kingdom, 1993, pp 66-67.

In 1990 the total number of British male university first-year students was 48,400 compared with 39,200 female first-year students. The gap between the university male and female students in the United Kingdom is now approximately 9 thousand compared with 13 thousand in 1985. The figures for polytechnics and colleges with respect to full-time UK home domiciled students indicates an approaching parity between males and females. Indeed, if the figure for England alone is taken, both male and female students number approximately 58 thousand. The universities still have some way to go before they achieve the equality of access which the former non-university sector has achieved. However,

the overall trend is one in which women are moving steadily towards equal access in higher education. The case for discrimination on this issue cannot be sustained. However, the clustering of women in limited subject areas, like English, education, sociology and health still persists. This is the case both for women students and women academic staff at all levels in the higher education hierarchy.

Women Academics - equal representation in higher education?

Given the marked increase in women students, have the numbers of women academics increased and are they equally represented in all grades of the higher education hierarchy? Women's share of academic employment in universities rose during the 1980s from 14 per cent to 22 per cent in 1991-92 (Women and Men in Britain, 1993, p.29). The rise in the number of women staff from 1983 onwards had been one of slow, barely discernible progress, until the period between 1989 and 1994 when the percentage of women staff almost doubled. (See Table 1.3).

Table 1.3

Full-time Graded Academic Staff By Sex (Great Britain) 1988-89 and 1993-94.

	Total	Men	Women	% Women
1984-85	29642	26339	3303	11.1
1985-86	29990	26543	3447	11.5
1986-87	30005	26495	3510	11.7
1987-88	29878	26288	3590	12.0
1988-89	29277	25512	3765	12.9
1993-94	53913	41247	12666	23.5

Source: Calculated from University Statistics, volume 1, Students and Staff, 1988-89 and 1993-94. Universties' Statistical Record.

At first sight, the figures in Table 1.3 suggest a marked improvement for women's share of employment in universties. However, the current percentage of 23.5 for women staff looks less impressive when one considers that the rise in numbers in the years 1993/94 is over three times that for 1988/98 which should, therefore have reflected a figure closer to 36 per cent. Even with the current full-time student population of approximately 55 per cent male and 45 per cent female, the distribution of male to female university staff of 76.5 per cent compared with 23.5 per cent, is still some way from adequately reflecting the student sex distribution. Is the picture any better in other sectors of higher education, given the near parity of male to female students in polytechnics, 'new' universities and colleges? (See 'other' category in Table 1.1, p.40 and polytechnics and colleges category in Table 1.2, p.44).

The numbers of male and female academic staff in establishments of further and higher education show a better representation of women compared with universities. In the years 1991-92 there were 25,600 men compared with 12,300 women (Education Statistics for the United Kingdom, 1994) which in percentage terms, gave men a 67.5% share of employment compared with 32.5% for women. Overall, women make up a fifth of full-time academic staff in both universities and polytechnics in Britain (Women and Men in Britain, 1993) and whilst

their representation in universities has risen, men continue to occupy a disproportionate share of higher education employment with a ratio of three to one in universities and two to one in colleges, polytechnics and the 'new' universities. However, the broad trend is one of gradual progress in women's share of academic employment and has to be acknowledged as a step in the right direction, albeit with qualification.

Equal representation across the grades?

The question of whether the rise in female appointments has led to greater promotional chances and an increased impact on power and policy, or whether women have merely continued to retain their lower status as 'the proles of the academic profession' (Rendel, 1984, p.163), can only be discerned by looking behind the aggregated facts and figures.

In a discussion of women's position in élite occupations which employs the sociological and theoretical perspectives of Bernstein and Bourdieu, Delamont (1989) investigates four occupations: university teaching, scientific research, medicine and law. She examines the way in which the cultural capital and symbolic power of these professions is changed by shifting gender divisions and how women in them form 'a muted group whose perspective has been neglected by scholars focusing on the profession' (p.196). The shifting of the boundaries between men

and women in the higher echelons of teaching was brought about by the arrival of co-educational schooling and the abolition of single-sex teacher training colleges in the period after 1945. These changes largely benefitted males whilst two career paths which had formally provided social mobility for able women as leaders of single-sex institutions (schools and colleges), were swept away with scarcely any debate (Delamont, 1989). She goes on to argue that the shifts in gender divisions were culturally reinforced by the literary and scientific intelligentsia of the period who concentrated on the social mobility of working class men through educational achievement at the expense of any debate on the contemporary role and status of women. Two fictional works which characterised this theme were 'Lucky Jim' by Kingsley Amis, 1954 and 'Look Back in Anger' by John Osborne, 1957. There were no similar novels or plays which portrayed heroines' abilities to use their educational ability. However, Delamont (1989) reminds us that such women *were* the concern of fiction writers in the pre-1939 period and in the nineteenth century (cf George Eliot and the Brontë sisters). A central theme of Delamont's analysis is that, despite the rise of feminism and sex equality legislation, the educational and career chances of women worsened in the period between 1945 and 1985 and new opportunities to replace those that have been lost, have not opened up.

In her examination of university teaching she begins by pointing out the lack of available data on the careers of academics employed in higher education in Britain or America, Delamont (1989). This void in research studies makes it difficult to discuss Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' or the taken-for-granted, and rarely defined cultural competences of university teaching in relation to the profession and its power structure:

> ...there is a sort of 'mythological charter' that such candidates have already assimilated much of the professsion's oral traditional habitus - though it is not expressed overtly in such terms, of course.
>
> (Atkinson & Delamont, 1985, in Delamont, 1989, p.30).

Using data from British and American statistical sources, she suggests that men and women may occupy different roles within the same occupation. Academic work in higher education comprises teaching, research and administration and within these activities lie a range of different functions and roles depending on the individual's position and grade within the institution. Part of the 'habitus' of university academe is that certain aspects of academic work carry higher status than others or, to use the concepts which Delamont borrowed from Bernstein (1973), promotion and recognition are more likely to be based upon the 'visible' critieria of publications and research than on the relatively 'invisible' criteria of teaching and administration, despite the rhetoric about their significance to the institution. For example, in her review

of the available American and British literature, Delamont finds that women university teachers did more teaching, especially at the lower levels, more pastoral care and less research and publication whilst men did less teaching, most of the PhD supervision and submitted more research publications.

The current statistics on the position of women in the hierarchy of British universities largely confirm Delamont's analysis with the latest figures continuing to show women staff concentrated at lower levels within establishments. At the highest level, men continue to occupy 95 per cent of the professoriate compared with women's 5 per cent share. Whilst the total number of female professors has risen since 1983/84 it has taken ten years to achieve the relatively small gain of 3.1 per cent. (See Table 1.4)

Table 1.4
University Full-Time Academic Staff: Professors 1988-89 and 1993-94 (Great Britain)

	Men	Women	% Women
1983-84	3684	86	2.3
1984-85	3615	89	2.4
1986-87	3854	101	2.5
1987-88	3931	108	2.7
1988-89	3855	113	2.8
1993-94	5484	319	5.4

Source: Calculated from University Statistics, Volume 1, Students and staff, 1988-89 and 1993-94. Universities' Statistical Record.

Even in the subject areas where women are relatively well represented, the latest data from the USR show that their share of the professoriate continues to be disproportionately low. (See Table 1.5)

Table 1.5

Full-Time Academic staff: Professors by Sex and Departmental Cost Centre Group, 1993-94 (Great Britain)

	Total	Men	% (1)	Women	% (1)
Education	2067	1302	63	765	37
Professors	158	133	84	25	16
Medicine, Dentistry & Health	13077	8658	66	4419	34
Professors	1227	1145	93	82	7
Admin. Business & Social Studies	8975	6688	75	2287	25
Professors	1279	1187	93	92	7
Language, Literature & area Studies	3620	2411	67	1209	33
Professors	449	394	88	55	12

(1) All the percentage calculations have been rounded up to the nearest whole number.
Source: Derived from University Statistics, Volume 1, Students and Staff, 1993-94. Universities' Statistical record, p.2.

The position in the female professoriate mirrors the unequal distribution of women students across subject areas. For example, there are more women professors in the subjects of education, health, and social studies than in the traditional 'male' subjects of science, engineering and agriculture: 1.8 per cent in biological sciences; 5 per cent in architecture and planning; one per cent in engineering and technology and none in agriculture, forestry and vetinary science compared with 37 per cent and 34 per cent for education and health, respectively (Universities' Statistical Record, 1993-94). However, given that women make up four fifths of the teaching profession in Britain (Women and Men in Britain, 1993), their share of employment in university education departments ought to be well in excess of their

37% representation. Viewed in this light, their 16% share of the professoriate may be one of the highest compared to other cost centres, but it scarcely reflects their predominance in the teaching profession as a whole. The most striking statistic is to be found in medicine, dentistry and health, where women are concentrated in greatest numbers in relation to the total number of female university staff. Here, they make up over a third of the staff but occupy only 7 per cent of the professoriate compared to 93% for men. If these figures raise questions about why women are so poorly represented in the university professoriate, the figures showing the overall position of women in the occupational hierarchy, raise even more questions about the relatively low status of large numbers of able women and why this pattern persists. (See Table 1.6)

Table 1.6

Full-Time Academic Staff By Grade and Sex, 1993-94 (Great Britain)

	Total full-time staff			**Teaching and Research**			**Research only**		
	Tot.	M	W	Tot.	M	W	Tot.	M	W
All academic staff	**53913**	**41247**	**12666**	**33988**	**27939**	**6049**	**19925**	**13308**	**6617**
Professors	5803	5484	319	5670	5366	304	133	118	15
Readers & Senior Lecturers	10523	9264	1259	9958	8826	1132	565	438	127
Lecturers	31815	23195	8620	17901	13555	4346	13914	964	4274
Others	5772	3304	2468	459	192	267	531	3112	2201

Key: Tot. - Total; M - Men; W - Women.

Source: Derived from University Statistics, Volume 1, Students and Staff, 1993-94, Universities' Statistical Record, p.2.

The figures in Table 1.6 show women academics relatively poorly represented in the more senior grades and heavily concentrated in the lecturer and 'other' grade. The 'Other' category incudes those on scales where the minimum is below the minimum of the lecturer/assistant lecturer scale including, for example, demonstrators and research assistants (Rendel, 1984, p.176). Out of the total number of women employed in universities, 87.5 per cent are concentrated in the lower grades compared with 12.5 per cent in the grades higher than lecturer. One particularly interesting feature of the current statistics on women academics shows that a much higher proportion of female than male staff are employed in research only posts. At first sight this might lead one to conclude that women are, at last, beginning to make a better showing in the more 'visible' and prestigious university posts. However, of those women appointed to research only posts, 97.8 per cent are positioned in the lowest two grades and of these, 33 per cent are in the 'other' grade where they are likely to be on short term, non-tenured contracts and engaged in low status, poorly paid research work where publication and recognition are least likely. Indeed, of the total numbers of women appointed to full-time academic posts, over half are located in the lecturer and 'other' grades of the 'research only' posts.

Despite the rise in the number of women appointed to academic posts in universties their promotional chances have not, commensurately

increased whilst their ability to make an impact upon power and policy remains tenuous and marginal.[5] The latest statistical data confirm Rendel's (1984) view that women continue, in the main, to be 'the proles of the academic profession' (p.163) and Delamont's (1989) argument that women occupy different segments of the university hierarchy with the majority holding contracts in the worst paid, least secure and least recognised jobs. The present preoccupation with cost efficiency in higher education is likely to intensify the current inclination of managers in many university and non-university institutions to appoint new staff, where possible, on fixed-term contracts at the low end of the salary range in return for heavy work loads in teaching, administration and research. This trend is not likely either to improve the position of women within the occupational structure of universities or their ability to carry out and publish research of the quality which would merit public acclaim and recognition.

Not much has been said so far about women academics in colleges and polytechnics and how they compare with those in universities, given their better representation. There are difficulties with this task, principally because the grading and pay structure of academic staff is different in the non-university sector. Here, senior lecturers, for example, do not have the same pay or status as those in universities and until very recently, neither colleges or polytechnics appointed Readers

or Professors.[6] Principal Lecturers [7] carry significant management responsibilities in colleges but they do not form part of the university career structure. The other problem is that until recently, (David, 1989; Coffey & Acker, 1991; Cann, Jones & Martin, 1991) there was scarcely any attention given to the position of women academics in non-university institutions. The article by Cann et al. (1991) concentrates on colleges of higher education and looks specifically at the position of women academic staff in a sample of seven institutions. It is one of the few studies available in this area of higher education and, given the dearth of literature and statisitial data on the non-university sector as a whole, it will be used to give some idea about how women fare in the grading structure of colleges. The findings of the study indicate that the unequal representation of women in middle and senior management positions is worse than that of universities and polytechnics. The problem was particularly noticeable in teacher education where one might have expected to have seen a better showing of women in higher grades given that between 90 - 92% of all primary, nursery and infant teachers are women (Women and Men in Britain, 1993) and where women account for 70% of the entry to B.Ed and PGCE courses (De Lyon & Migniuolo, 1989, p.3). Both the writings of Coffey & Acker (1991) and Cann et al.(1991) report that men overwhelmingly manage teacher education in an area where the proportion of women to men

staff is particularly high. Indeed Cann et al. report that women appear to have lost power in teacher training in recent years and De Lyon & Migniuolo assert that teacher training has 'remained and still is remarkable for its sexual division of labour' (1989, p.8). Out of a total of 95 available Heads of Department posts, only six were held by women. As in universties, women were absent from positions where decisions of power and policy are taken and this includes college governing bodies and academic boards. Two colleges were found to have a better proportion of women in management postions in relation to the other five and Cann et al. report that, significantly, both these institutions 'provided the clearest evidence of institutional awareness of equality and gender issues,' (1989, p.22). With the exception of one college, the research showed a picture of 'deeply entrenched inequality' behind a rhetoric on the part of managers which insisted 'that we treat all staff equally' (Cann et al., p.25).

There is a critical need for more data on why so many able women are not reaching positions of senior management responsibility and what it is that stands in the way of achieving a more efficient and equally distributed use of human resources. There is also an absence of detailed accounts which convey the lived experience of what it feels like to be a woman academic, be it professor or research assistant. Delamont, for example, points out that, 'There is no research which

deals with women in academic life which approaches the empathy of Epstein (1983) on lawyers or Lorber (1984) on doctors (1989, p.202). This is a serious gap in sociological literature because it is the indeterminate aspects of academic occupations which Delamont (1989) believes are impenetrable to women. Qualitative studies on women university teachers might reveal those aspects of the more 'visible' academic identity which remain hidden to women as well as how they perceive their work in relation to the institutional power structure and successful men and women. Some exceptions to this void in the literature can be found in a collection of small-scale writings on women academics, (cf Acker, 1980; Sutherland, 1985). Other writings have focused on particular roles and responsibilities within higher education. For example, Burrage, H (1983) conducted a study of British university science teachers; Scott and Porter (1984) have written about the marginalization of women in research from their perspectives as feminists and research associates and, more recently, David (1989) has written one of the few available papers on women teachers' careers in a polytechnic from her position as an academic manager in a social science department. She sets out to analyse the issues and factors which construct female academic careers by reflecting upon her own career rise to the head of the social science department at what was then called the South Bank Polytechnic. [8] David offers a rare account of what it is

like to be an academic manager within the relatively new ethos of corporate business managerialism which had begun to penetrate the culture of most higher education institiutions. This context poses particular difficulties for women like herself whose value systems include the adoption of a feminist approach to management and teaching. Moreover, she was disappointed to find that the various femininst critiques of social science had barely influenced a subject which had seen a significant rise in the numbers of female teachers and students and yet remained within 'the traditional, business-as-usual, gender-blind paradigm' (David, 1989, p.205). She suggested that one way forward was for women to rethink their respective identities as teachers and researchers and what they should be communicating to large numbers of women and men about their respective lives and careers.

The relationship between gender and academic identity has already been mentioned by both Delamont (1989) and Davies (1989). It is a theme which has attracted the interest of a number of writers who have studied the work of women in higher education institutions (cf Taylorson, 1984; Thomas, 1990) A concern with identity has also featured prominently in the writings on teachers and careers (cf Ball & Goodson, 1985; Sikes, Measor & Wood; Nias, 1983; 1993; Maclure, 1993). Whilst not focused specifically on gender, Hargreaves's (1994)

latest work examines what he describes as an acute identity crisis in the teaching profession. He argues strongly that teachers need to make fundamental changes at personal, professional and social levels if they are to survive the changing structures and cultures of teaching in a postmodern age.

Some of the ideas and concepts used by these writers have been drawn upon to examine the connections between socialization, change and the emergence of an academic identity in my study of mature women students. The exploraton of changing identity in relation to gender is an important theme in the study, particularly in the context of a group of women for whom the roles of wife, mother and housewife had been their main source of identity.

Mature women students in higher education

Expansion in higher education provision (Department of Education and Science, 1987; 1991; HM Inspectorate, 1991) has resulted in a steady rise in the numbers of mature students studying for both first and post-graduate degrees since 1988. (See Table 1.7).

Table 1.7

Student numbers: by qualification aim, country of study, mode of attendance, age and gender.

United Kingdom **Thousands**

	Academic year 1988				Academic year 1989				Academic year 1990			
	PG	FD	O	T	PG	FD	O	T	PG	FD	O	T
England *												
Full-time												
Under 21												
Male	0.2	121.6	19.9	141.7	0.2	129.3	20.4	150.0	0.2	138.4	23.0	161.6
Female	0.2	106.5	15.9	122.6	0.2	116.8	16.9	133.9	0.3	128.6	19.4	148.2
Total	0.4	228.1	35.8	264.3	0.4	246.2	37.3	283.9	0.5	267.0	42.4	309.8
21-24												
Male	15.4	59.2	11.0	85.6	15.3	62.8	11.1	89.2	16.7	67.1	12.2	96.0
Female	10.6	46.7	7.3	64.6	11.1	49.6	7.7	68.5	12.2	54.2	9.1	75.4
Total	26.0	105.9	18.3	150.2	26.5	112.4	18.9	157.7	28.9	121.3	21.3	171.5
25 +												
Male	20.7	17.9	8.8	47.4	21.4	20.5	8.8	50.7	23.4	23.5	11.0	57.9
Female	11.2	19.6	8.9	39.7	12.5	23.6	9.4	45.4	14.5	28.3	10.9	53.7
Total	31.9	37.5	17.7	87.1	33.9	44.1	18.2	96.2	37.9	51.7	21.9	111.5
All Ages												
Male	36.3	198.6	39.8	274.7	36.9	212.6	40.3	289.9	40.3	229.0	46.2	315.5
Female	22.0	172.8	32.1	226.9	23.9	190.1	34.0	248.0	26.9	211.0	39.4	277.3
Total	58.3	371.5	71.8	501.6	60.8	402.7	74.4	537.9	62.7	440.0	85.6	592.8

Key: PG - Postgraduaate; FD - First Degree; O - Other Higher Education; T - Total
* Only the full-time figures for England have been included.

Source: Derived from Higher Education Statistics for the United Kingdom, 1993, Government Statistical Service, pp 42-43.

Table 1.7 shows a steady rise in the figures for men and women students in the 21-24 and 25 and over age group since 1988. Numbers of women in the 25 and over age group have increased to the point where they now outnumber the men: for example, in the academic year 1990 there were 28,300 women compared with 23,500 men studying for first degrees. Similarly, there is a slight increase of women over men in the

part-time, first degree category in the same year with the figures of 14,900 and 13,400 respectively, (Higher Education Statistics for the United Kingdom, 1993, p.43).

The growth of mature students, particularly among women, has attracted a steady flow of research interest in recent years. Many of these have been stimulated by a desire to find out how they compared to the more traditional, younger student with respect to learning and degree outcomes. These have been mainly quantitative studies based on interviews and questionnaires (cf Woodley, 1984; Woodley et al., 1987; Smithers & Griffin, 1986) with a focus on demographic factors related to access, type of course studied and qualification outcomes than with the mature student's experience of higher education. They do, however, offer some general observations about the educational and social characteristics of mature students which apply mainly to women. Their 'typical' mature woman applicant is in her thirties, already educationally advantaged and likely to want to study social science, arts, education or economics (Smithers & Griffin, 1986, p.66). They are highly motivated and more inclined than men to want personal fulfilment rather than career gain from their chosen course of study, although Smithers and Griffin (1986) found that career enhancement *was* an important factor for some women. Woodley et al. (1987) noted that more women than men lacked confidence in their academic abilities and

both investigations found that married women experienced difficulties in combining study with family commitments.

Lack of confidence and self-esteem features as an issue of concern in almost all the available literature on mature women students (cf Edwards, 1990; 1993; Sperling, 1991; Pascall & Cox, 1993a; 1993b). It was noted too, in a much earlier study on adult students (Hopper and Osborn, 1975). In contrast to the more recent quantitative research, this study was informed by a theoretical concern with the selection processes of education and social mobility. Their adult students were seeking higher education to compensate for the 'relative deprivation' of their earlier schooling and to resolve an identity crisis which was rooted in 'ambivalence towards themselves and occupational marginality' (1975, p.28). Whilst not addressing themselves to women specifically, they attributed low levels of academic confidence to older, rather than younger students, as a feature of their earlier 'rejective experiences' which were less common 'among students whose educational experiences was one of constant success' (Hopper & Osborn, 1975, p. 119). However, in a study which placed gender rather than age differentiation at the centre of its analysis, Thomas (1990) found that even among very able, female physics students who had been to single-sex schools, they were not confident in the university physics department in comparison with their male colleagues:

> These were women whose self-image was undergoing a change: in school, they were clever, confident students who would have successful careers as physicists. University challenged that identity.
>
> (Thomas,1990, p.181).

The issue of confidence among mature women students would seem to relate very closely to the acquisition of an academic identity and it is signalled here as a further aspect of the gender theme. The conflict between gender, subject and an academic identity has been examined in undergraduate arts and science students (Thomas, 1990) and at the level of women PhD candidates (Taylorson, 1984). Conflict and self-doubt about academic ability would appear to be a salient feature of women's experience of higher education, regardless of previous academic success and achievement. However, the cause of women's low levels of academic confidence does not appear to be related to performance. Recent statistical evidence, for example, shows a higher proportion of mature women succeeding at first degree level than men. (See Table 1.7). The academic success of mature women in relation to men is also highlighted in some of the recent research studies. Woodley et al (1987) found that 'women mature students were more likely than men to graduate and, having graduated, were more likely to gain a good degree' (p.152). Morgan (1981) also commented on the high results achieved by her sample of women students where 30 out of 41 gained upper second or first class degrees (p.67). There is

an unexplained gulf between the available evidence and women's perceptions of their academic ability which few sociologists have properly addressed. Why do able women persist in doubting their academic ability in the face of evidence to the contrary? It is an issue which frequently posed questions in my study of mature women student teachers and the search for possible connections between confidence, gender, student and changing identity became a key theme of the inquiry.

The quantitative studies on mature women students tend to be written from the perspective of the problems which women create for the institutions of higher education rather than the difficulties which higher education might present for them, (Acker, 1984). Unlike some of the studies on women in adult education (cf McLaren, 1985; Hutchinson & Hutchinson, 1986), they are not informed by gender or theories of women's education. Their work presents some useful data on a group of students formerly underrepresented in higher education, but several questions remain unanswered. We do not know, for example, how the women themselves experience higher education and what it means to their lives, their families and their futures. We know very little about the sources of motivation which bring them to higher education in the first place and how they survive the pressures of family and academic commitments once they get there; neither do we know

what changes higher education makes to their private or public lives.

From rather different perspectives and starting points, some of these questions have now been examined by two, important new contributions to studies of mature women in higher education whose primary concern was to put women at the centre of their enquiry. The studies of Pascall and Cox (1993) and Edwards (1993) are qualitative accounts of women undergraduates at various points of their degree courses. Both studies ask different questions and reach different conclusions about the effects of higher education on mature women but they each share an interest in examining the relationship between education, family and career. Edwards's study is based on thirty-one women in five institutions in the southeast of England and Pascall and Cox's study, on forty-three women in two institutions in the East Midlands. The women in Edwards's study are all mothers from differing social class and ethnic backgrounds who are studying for a social science degree. They were each interviewed at the beginning and end of their first and third years. Using semi-structured interviews Edwards was able to gather data on the women's current and retrospective accounts of their student experience. She was also concerned to locate the women's experience of higher education within a context of 'family-education biographies from childhood to the present' (Edwards, 1993, p.7). Using a feminist perspective she draws

upon the disciplines of sociology and social psychology to examine the interaction of family and education in relation to the impact it has upon the women's lives. The central thrust of her study is an exploration of the dilemmas and conflicts which the women experience as they try to separate or connect family and education. The private and public spheres of family and education 'are not separate entities' (Edwards, 1993, p.15) but impinge upon each other in ways which crucially effect the way in which women relate to education and their families. The power relationship in the family and the way in which the epistemological value system of higher education largely dismisses the personal realm of family experience as invalid knowledge, poses particular problems for 'mother-students' (Edwards, 1990. p.189). Both family and higher education are perceived as social constructions with considerable power to make excesssive demands on women students. Using Coser's (1974) description of family and education as 'greedy institutions' (p.6), Edwards argues that, 'Women are under pressure to achieve success in each of the two greedy institutions by showing that neither suffers because of their participation in the other' (1993, p.63). The central argument of Edward's thesis is that most women would, if it were possible, prefer to integrate and connect their academic work with their family lives but the socially constructed value systems of both institutions favour a separating approach. It is on these

grounds that Edwards concludes that higher education 'will never be easy for women' (1993, p.158). Despite the acknowledgement that the women had gained confidence as a result of being students in higher education, Edwards reports that they felt 'deviant' within an academic environment which was predicated on the 'bachelor boy' norm (Edwards, 1993) and different from other mothers outside the institution (p.144). They also recognised that the power balance between themselves and those in authority had shifted as a result of their graduate status but their family responsibilities continued to constrain the type of paid work they could undertake and few had found job opportunities which were commensurate with their graduate status (Edwards, 1993, p.147).

The scenario presented by Edwards's study shows mature women as uneasy misfits in the world of higher education which did little to alter their patterns of subordination in the work place or in the domestic division of labour. This is in marked contrast to the energetically charged accounts of higher education experience given by Pascall and Cox's (1993) mature women students. This study has already been extensively discussed so some brief points of comparison only, will be made. Their study began with a postal questionnaire on full-time mature women students' educational, work and domestic backgrounds which was sent to two higher education institutions. Forty-three of

these women were later given semi-structured interviews which elicited information about the women's schooling, domestic lives and expectations and experience of higher education. Eight years later, just over half the group were followed up and re-interviewed. This time, the interviews focused upon their subsequent careers and the impact which higher education was deemed to have had upon their personal and public lives. The degree studies of Pascall and Cox's respondents were varied and not confined to one degree course as in Edwards's study. The majority studied Social Science and Arts and the remainder, Education, Business Studies and Science. The central concern of their study was to question whether theories of cultural and social reproduction penetrated higher education to the same extent as schooling was said to reproduce patterns which turned women towards domesticity (Deem, 1978; Delamont 1980). The women in Pascall and Cox's study were unequivocal in their view that higher education provided a route *away* from domesticity and an escape from poorly paid part-time jobs. Moreover, it was seen as providing 'a source of identity when being a housewife failed to perform that function,' (1993, p.76). Unlike Edwards's respondents, most of the women were established in careers at the point of the follow-up study although this may be partly attributed to the greater gap between graduation and follow up interviews than that of Edwards's study. Whilst many of

these careers were in the traditional, 'feminine' occupations of teaching and social work, the women credited higher education with a major role in enabling them to make choices 'about the balance between private and public life' (Pascall & Cox, 1993, p.143). The career experiences of the women in Pascall's and Cox's study challenge deterministic accounts of gender. However, there is, as this chapter has suggested, strong evidence of male dominance in positions of power at all levels of education which are no doubt partly sustained by role which women continue to play in domesticity. As long as this imbalance of power persists, the reproduction argument cannot be wholly dismissed. However, Pascall and Cox (1993) argue that the reproduction thesis 'must be seen as contested' (p.143). It needs to be reworked to take account of changes in the economy and new interpretations of women's relationship to paid work, marriage and domesticity. There were, for example, signs in the studies of Edwards and Pascall and Cox as well as in my own, that women wanted a greater share of control in what they did in the home and outside of it. For many, this meant directing their energies and efforts towards career development and financial independence. Pascall and Cox's women embraced the opportunity which higher education had given them to acquire new identities and an enhanced career. Higher education for women, they believe, has 'real potential for destabilizing traditional notions of femininity and the

dependence they sustain' (Pascall & Cox, 1993, p.143).

The relationship of reproduction theories to schooling, domesticity, higher education and career has been examined as a predominent theme in shaping women's relationship to education. Higher education has been presented as possessing a different set of meanings for mature women who bring to it a life history of delayed opportunity, gendered work experience and motherhood. The themes examined in my case study arise from this starting point and they draw extensively on many of the theoretical perspectives sketched out in this chapter.

My investigation relates closely to the issues and concerns examined in the studies of Edwards (1993) and Pascall and Cox (1993) and several of their findings and insights are discussed in relation to my own analysis. However, my case study differs from their studies in several important respects. It is concerned specifically with mature women B.Ed students, who had embarked upon a four-year, rather than a three-year degree course. The degree course has a stronger vocational orientation than those of the studies just discussed. Moreover, its focus was concentrated entirely on the women's first year of teacher training in order to find out how the women learned to become students having spent several years in employment and as mothers and wives.

Among the themes discussed, gender has featured as a central concept in the writing on women, domesticity and education. In a study of women who had waited until family responsibilities were less onerous before taking up higher education to train for primary teaching, the concept of gender plays an almost inevitable part in the study as one of its three interlinking themes. Apart from Edwards's (1993) examination of the concepts of separating or connecting education as part of the mother-student experience, very little of the literature reviewed in this chapter addresses the notion of *how* mature women become students after several years of absence from formal education. Student teacher socialization therefore figures as a second interrelating theme. One of the strengths of both Edwards and Pascall and Cox's study is the place they give to autobigraphy and life history accounts in shaping the women's response to higher education and the family. The life course concept is used to give a historical and contemporaneous perspective on the women's decision to teach. Moreover, its value lies in its ability to show how gender, family, socialization and identity interconnect and it forms a third key theme of the study. The acquisition of an academic identity is problematic for women and its relationship to gender has emerged as a recurrent topic of research interest in the literature on women in higher education. The changing identities and academic confidence of the women student teachers

featured as a significant aspect of change in both private and public spheres of the womens' lives, and thus formed a further theme of the study.

The research methodology used to uncover the processes of socialization as well as the dilemmas and paradoxes of the women's experience of higher education, is the subject of the next chapter.

NOTES

(1) Political support for Access was expressed in a 1987 White Paper which declared that 'places should be available for all with the necessary qualities to benefit from higher education,' and in ministerial speeches: 'When the number of 18 year olds starts to rise again in the latter part of the 1990s, the whole of higher education will be poised to expand on the basis both of this increased participation from the conventional student age group, and of new patterns of recruitment among non-conventional students.' (Kenneth Baker, 1989).
Access had become central, not marginal to higher education (Wagner, 1989, p.156). Details of expansionist reforms and the widening of access to an increasing range of potential students can be found in three key sources: (Department of Education and Science (DES) 1987; 1991 and HM Inspectorate, 1991).

(2) In 1993, the binary line between universties and polytechnics was abolished as a result of changes to legislation in the Further and Higher Education Act,1992, Polytechnics are now referred to as the 'new' universities in order to distinguish them from the previously existing, chartered universities. The new legislation did not apply to colleges of higher education who were free to make a two-stage application for university status to the Secretary of State for Education. Three former colleges of higher education have so far made successful applications and are now the Universities of Derbyshire, Hertfordshire and Luton, respectively.

(3) In order to make a distinction between established universities which were in existence before changes to legislation in 1992 and polytechnics which have recently acquired university status - the former shall be referred to as 'old' and the latter as'new' universities.

(4) Universities' and Higher Education Funding Councils increased funding to institutions where they recruited up to and beyond student target numbers (STNs). Since 1993 however, funding policy has changed. Differential funding now operates with certain subjects receiving more or less funding than others. For example, Social Science, and undergraduate Teacher Training programmes now attract less funding than Science and Mathematics degree programmes. In addition, there now exist newly imposed penalties for institutions who either under or over recruit their allocated STN. The effect of this change may depress the current trend in rising student numbers.

(5) However, from October 1st, 1995, there will be 5 women Vice-Chancellors in UK universities. I am grateful to Professor R.G. Burgess of Warwick University, for providing me with this latest information.

(6) Since the acquisition of universtity status in 1993, the former polytechnics have added a further layer of senior research appointments onto their existing grading structure. Some colleges of higher education currently engaged in the process of application for university status, have also begun to appoint Readers and Professors as part of the criteria necessary to achieve research degree awarding powers.

(7) A Principal Lecturer occupies the grade immediately above that of Senior Lecturer in the colleges of HE grading structure. It generally carries substantial management responsibilities and a commensurately reduced teaching load. It is <u>not</u> part of the university grading structure.

(8) The formerly titled Southbank Polytechnic has now been renamed the Southbank University as a result of its newly acquired university status.

CHAPTER 2

THE RESEARCH APPROACH

Understanding how the mature women learned to become student teachers required a research approach which would yield a depth and range of insight across a variety of cultural, institutional and historical contexts. Student teacher adaptation took place within the institutional life of the college and the family; it occurred in the schools where the women took their first, tentative steps as trainee teachers; it was located within a contemporary time frame which reached out to the future as well as being strongly influenced by their past lives as pupils and daughters. In order to penetrate the meaning of this experience from the women's perspective, I needed to be able to investigate the 'multiple realities' (Merriam, 1988, p.17) of student teacher socialization as they were lived out on a day-to-day basis. These realities were experienced subjectively, interactively and in the context of structural constraints. The challenge of the investigation was to offer an explanation of social change which took account of the interrelatedness of history, biography and structure. Capturing the complexity of these changes as they occurred over a one-year period, would require several data sources which would demonstrate 'how all the parts work together to form the whole' (Merriam, 1988, p.16). Meaning, insight and 'thick description'

(Geertz, 1975) about how the women experienced change as they became student teachers were central objectives of the investigation and the methods and philosophical assumptions underlying qualitative research, offered the most fruitful potential for revealing the understanding I sought.

The Qualitative Paradigm

One of the strengths of qualitative research is its ability to render the distinctive characteristics of a situation in a particular context, to close examination and analysis. Understanding of this kind, is the prime objective of qualitative research and, according to Patton,

> is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting - what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting - and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting.
>
> (Patton, 1985, p.1).

Patton's words succinctly describe the task I had set myself which was to present a detailed analysis which traced the patterns and processes of socialization in a group of women who had chosen to become student teachers alongside their domestic commitments as mothers and wives. Understanding what the women's lives were like as students could only be 'communicated faithfully' and authentically, if full cognizance was

taken of the impact of academic apprenticeship on their families and those of families upon their student experience. What, for example, 'is going on' for the women as they leave their homes each day for a college of higher education to sit among rows of noviciate student teachers in the 'strange' world of lecture theatres and seminar rooms? How do they make sense of the coded language through which notice boards signal messages about timetables, room locations and tutor groupings? How do they experience their first tangible reality as a student? Is it associated with the physical presence of notepads, textbooks, pens and reading lists and what effect do these new trappings of academe have upon their domestic lives in terms of the increasing mental and physical space they will take up as the year progresses? How can time be managed so that academic and family commitments can be met and what difficulties are thrown up in the process? Questions like these, which interrogate the meaning of the social situation from participants' perspectives and the sense they make of it, form the essence of qualitative enquiry. Patton (1985) believed that depth of understanding about the meanings which individuals construct in diverse social settings was the chief purpose of qualitative research. Subjectivity and interpretation characterise qualitative inquiry in contrast to the "scientific" or "traditional" paradigm, which is premissed on a view of the world as a measurable, objective reality. In a

comparison of the main differences between the two paradigms, Merriam states that within the qualitative framework, 'research is exploratory, inductive, and emphasizes processes rather than ends (1988, p.17). Such an approach was ideally suited to an investigation which sought to make explicit the processes of student adaptation which the women underwent in the course of their first year. Although, for some women, these processes of change had already begun to occur before they enrolled as B.Ed students: several women, for example, had undertaken various pre-entry courses [1] designed to give them the qualifications they needed to enter a B.Ed degree programme. The adaptations which occurred during the year of the study were thus neither beginnings or ends but dynamic and ongoing processes, reflecting the women's relationships with their families and the institution of higher education at a particular point in time. An important point in the study is that the manifestations of these changes shifted from less stable to more stable adaptations as the year progressed so that some adaptive strategies were discarded whilst others became fixed and repeated patterns of behaviour. The transitory and shifting nature of these adaptive processes could, I believed, only be adequately captured by an interpretive, exploratory research approach. The construction of a theoretical framework which would explain the data took shape through an interplay of inductive and deductive reasoning.

The social categories and concepts which emerged, arose from repeated examination and sifting of the data, 'which were grounded in the context itself' (Merriam, 1988, p.13). Following Glaser and Strauss's (1968) insights on theory building, I was attempting the 'discovery of a grounded theory' which would offer new concepts and a different way of looking at student socialization. Finding a theory which adequately explained the data, whilst maintaining 'social authenticity' (Ball, 1991, p.189), were key challenges of an inductive form of reasoning whose main purpose was to capture what Ball (1991) described as the 'social totality' of the pheonomena being studied.

Many of the features and characteristics of qualitative research also apply to case study research. Indeed, the terms, 'qualitative research', 'ethnography', 'fieldwork' and 'case study' are often conflated and used interchangeably. What each of the terms has in common, is an association with open-ended approaches; however, there are distinguishing features between them and it is important to be clear about their relative differences, however slight. Two further features characterise the qualitative approach: one is the centrality of the researcher who is the 'primary instrument' (Merriam, 1988, p.19) for collecting and analysing the data and the other, is that it usually involves fieldwork. The researcher goes into 'the field' to study the people, country, factory or school in order to observe participants' social

interactions and behaviour in their natural setting. The researcher strives to become intensely familiar with what is being studied by observing and taking part in the social situation. 'Fieldwork' is the term used to denote all the activities involved in the data gathering stage of the study. 'Field *method* ' is an umbrella term (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973) which concerns the means by which the fieldwork is conducted. Burgess (1985a) describes it as "a somewhat ambiguous term that concerns not only techniques, but also 'methodology' and 'research procedure' " (p.3). Field methods within the qualitative paradigm allow for a flexible and pragmatic approach which makes it possible for the researcher to combine whatever methods and techniques will best reveal for analysis, the issue under study.

> Different methods of investigation may be used to complement qualitative methods with the result that different methodologies may be integrated by the researcher.
>
> (Burgess, 1985b, p.5).

I used a blend of field methods during the fieldwork stage of my study which included semi-structured interviews, life history methods, personal documents in the form of diaries and participant observation. Qualitative research is thus an overarching term which subsumes fieldwork, ethnography and case study. Fieldwork and field methods are umbrella terms beneath which lie the activities, methods, techniques and research procedures used to collect the data.

What Constitutes A Case Study?

The term 'case study' is less easy to define and confusion, rather than clarity, appears to hold sway over its meaning. The question of what actually constitutes and defines case study resarch has been the subject of considerable debate (cf Stenhouse,1984; Ruddock,1984; Merriam, 1988; Burgess, 1988; Platt, 1988; Schuller, 1988; Burgess & Ruddock, 1993). One problem, as Merriam (1988) has observed, is that case study is often assumed to have the same meaning as grounded theory, participant observation, ethnography, qualitative research and fieldwork. A further confusion is that terms like 'case history', 'case record' and 'case method' are sometimes used synonymously with 'case study' without the benefit of defining distinctions to point up their differences. To some extent, the term used depends on the purposes and goals to which the case study is being put (Merriam, 1988). It can also relate to the values and subject discipline of the researcher. For example, in an explanatory footnote to a paper written by Stenhouse (1984) which was published after his death, Burgess and Ruddock reported that Stenhouse used the term 'case study methods' rather than 'ethnographic methods' because he 'saw ethnography as tainted with colonialism' (Stenhouse, 1984, p.229). Stenhouse's academic background in history led him to adopt case study methods which were closer to the discipline of oral history than any of the social sciences,

believing the former to own a more rigorous methodology. Case study research is not, therefore, confined to social science investigations. It draws upon a variety of academic disciplines and methodologies and can include qualitative or quantitative data or, a combination of both. However, its wide usage by disparate bodies and groups of researchers partly contributes to the haze which surrounds its meaning. As so often happens when technical language slips into common parlance, definition becomes blurred, over time, and the term comes to mean different things to different people. Burgess (1993) provides a salutory illustration of this point in a paper on research sponsorship and its relationship to research design. The context concerns a letter from the Department of Education and Science to Local Education Authorities inviting them to bid for money to evaluate activities that had been supported by Education Support Grants. In a list of criteria specifying how the evalualtion should be conducted, mention is made of evidence generated 'in the form of a case record' (p.9). Having made clear the specific nature of this qualitative approach, Burgess points out that it was:

> not unusual to find that members of the local authority who received the letter were not only unclear about what constituted a case-record but also the cost involved in conducting such work.
>
> (Burgess, 1993, p.10).

Later on in the same paper, the former Training Commission appears to

have used the term 'case-study methodology' as a form of shorthand for a survey method (1993, p.12). Both these examples demonstrate the importance of agreed and clear definitions about research approaches if time and money is not to be lost and the required data delivered. Equally, it is important to be clear about the prescriptions of case study research in an investigation which sets out, as mine does, to be a case study of mature women students. So, what *is* a case study?

Firstly, the choice of research approach is closely related to the questions the researcher wants to ask of the investigation. Two key questions helped me decide at an early stage that a case study approach would yield the insight and rich data source that I sought. How did the women learn to become student teachers and why did they decide to take up teaching when they did? Yin (1984) argued that "how" and "why" questions were appropriate for case study, history, and experimental designs whilst "what" and "how many" questions were more suited to survey research. Following a group of twenty-five women through the first year of their teacher training course would provide a focused examination of one group of mature students and their evolving patterns of adaptation. Asking each of the women about the timing of their decision to teach and what factors led up to it would yield an array of historical and biographical detail from which patterns and trends might emerge. Secondly, Smith's (1978) definition of a case study as a

'bounded system' though which the focus of the investigation can be identified, provided a clear benchmark against which I could justify my use of a case study approach to a study of student socialization.

> ...a case study is an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution or a social group. The bounded system, or case, might be selected because it is an instance of some concern, issue, or hypothesis.
>
> (Merriam, 1988, pp. 9-10).

The scale of possible case study investigation is therefore very wide. It can be the study of an entire country or, in disciplines like psychology, the study of 'parts of an individual' (Schuller, 1988, p.60). Psychotherapists like Dorothy Rowe (1983) and Lily Pincus (1974) for example, have drawn upon case study material of individual clients to explain and illuminate the nature of depression and the process of bereavement, respectively. In Rowe's research, the focus of the investigation is the phenomenon of clinical depression. Instances of the way in which depression manifests itself in individuals are presented in the form of selected 'case studies' of clients who have experienced this type of psychological illness. In this way, knowledge and understanding of depression is furthered by providing illustrative 'cases' of its causes, effects and treatment. According to Platt (1988) one constituent of case study research is that 'more than one case may be used' (p.2). Thus, in this example, the study of depression is the principle 'bounded system' or 'case' within which other 'cases' are used to exemplify the

way in which it effects individual sufferers. Case studies can therefore draw upon and include other case studies.

In my investigation, a social group has been selected in order to examine a specific aspect of social behaviour namely, that of student socialization within the social setting of an institution of higher education. A number of student groups could have been selected from a range of identifying factors which might have included specific sex or age groupings, degree subject, length of degree, part-time or full-time degree programmes, among others. A group of mature women students training for teaching on a four-year B.Ed degree programme was the selected focus for study. This group was the 'bounded system' or 'case' which would be studied in order to examine processes of student adaptation. It formed what Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis (1983) referred to as, 'an instance drawn from a class' (p.3), an instance of student socialization selected from a range of other potential 'cases' within the same institution or 'class', for its potential to further understanding about the processes of change which the mature women underwent as they learned to become student teachers.

However, selecting a focus for case study is probably as likely to be determined by pragmatic and instrumental factors as it is by its ability to meet established case study criteria. Several researchers have commented upon the pragmatic necessity of their work, (cf. Schuller,

1988; Hargreaves, 1985; Ball, 1984; Hammersley, 1984). This was certainly true of my research with pragmatic imperatives also driving the way in which the research was conducted. My work as B.Ed admissions tutor gave me direct contact with candidates seeking entry to the course which largely took place in the form of individual, formal and advisory interviews which occurred on an almost daily basis. A significant number of these candidates were mature women [2] who were attracted to teacher training by the recent local and national initiatives described in the introductory chapter to widen access to higher education. A question I often asked concerned why they wanted to take up teaching and why, in particular, at this point of their lives. I was struck by the energy and intensity of the womens' answers which frequently took the form of sustained and vivid accounts of their educational experiences and personal life histories. They, in turn, asked me what the course entailed and how it would be taught. Their reaction to my response was generally a mixture of animated interest and anxiety about how they would cope with the demands of a four year course they were clearly very keen to begin. Following a group of these women through the first year of the B.Ed course in order to examine the problems and issues associated with their adaptation to the student role, had a distinct advantage. Apart from seeking permission from the head of school to carry out the investigation, there would be

no difficulty in obtaining data since it was part of my ongoing work as admissions tutor. This was an important consideration in the initial selection of a topic for a doctoral thesis. I worked in a large, diversified college of higher education whose principal function was teaching. At the time of the study, research was a minority activity carried out by a small cadre of established academics. It was not part of the embedded culture of the institution and, apart from a small number of tutors who had completed Masters degrees by research, or who had successfully submitted doctoral theses, it was even rarer to find anyone actively engaged in research in the school of education. Years of unsuccessful bids for time to conduct a classroom research project based on an aspect of teaching English, my preferred option, convinced me that I was unlikely to make headway with a research project which required financial commitment from a limited staff development budget.[3] If I wanted to engage in a research project which was likely to lead to a successful outcome, I would need to choose a problem to study which was part of my everyday work and where access to data would not present insurmountable problems. My role as admissions tutor therefore played a key part in determining the focus for study.

Merriam (1988) cites intrinsic interest as a legitimate reason for selecting a case and my interest in the women's lives and their subsequent progress on the B.Ed course certainly played an important

part in the early decisions about both the focus and the design of the research. Given that I had received no funding for the project, apart from a one-year teaching remission of three hours a week, I had to be reasonably confident that I would sustain my interest in a project which would add considerably to my workload for several years to come. It was equally important that the women selected for study would also derive interest and enjoyment from the part which they played in the research. I had already established that the women were keen to talk about their lives in relation to their aspiration to teach and my hope was that they would continue to enjoy talking about their student experiences throughout the first year. The need to sustain their involvement from the beginning to the end of the data gathering phase therefore partly influenced the field method I chose to use. The use of tape recorded, semi-structured interviews at four key points of the first year, was to be the principal data source from which I would gain insights about the processes and patterns of student adaptation. I could not afford to 'lose' key informants on the way so I pinned a great deal of faith in the belief that they would want to honour their initial consent (see appendix 3) to be interviewed by keeping to agreed interview appointments, despite the increased pressures and demands on their lives now that they were student teachers. Luckily, my hope was realised and all the women in the research group came to each of the four interviews with

the result that I was able to produce complete data sets in the form of tape-recorded transcripts. They often said how much they welcomed the opportuntity to talk to a tutor who could give their concerns undivided attention for an hour or more [4] and many said, that articulating their thoughts about how they were adapting to the student role, helped to give their lives a renewed sense of perspective. At the outset of the study I decided to adopt a feminist principle about the way in which the women would be involved in the research which was that I would not use them as objects for a research enterprise in which I, the researcher, was the only beneficiary. I had constructed the case study in the hope that it would ultimately benefit both the researched and the researcher as well as contribute further knowledge and understanding about student socialisation. Their unsolicited communication to me about how much they were gaining from the interviews and how much they looked forward to them came as a welcome surprise which greatly added to my own enjoyment of these occasions.

A further pragmatic consideration relates to the length of the case study. Schuller (1988) argued that knowing where the case study started and how long it was likely to be, were fundamentally important questions which required clear answers. One obvious constraint on the length of my case study were the university Ph.D regulations governing the length of time which could be spent on researching and writing up

the thesis before it was required for submission. My status as a part-time Ph.D candidate meant that I should complete at some point between four and seven years. My initial intention was that I should aim for completion by the end of the fourth year. This would allow approximately one year to collect the data and three years to study, analyse and write up the investigation. Other influential factors concerned the cyclical nature of the B.Ed degree programme and the need to be engaged in fieldwork at a point when the mature women were likely to feel the process of adjustment to the student role most keenly. Schuller (1988) points out that the presence of an established pattern or internal structure to the events under examination makes it easier to provide a rationale for 'knocking in the starting and finishing posts at particular points in time' (p.62). The B.Ed degree programme has a clearly defined internal structure and an established pattern of time frames which are easily identified as academic terms and years within a four-year training process. A starting post could be the beginning of the first year and the finishing post, at the end of the four year programme. Ideally, the data collection stage of the study would have spanned the entire degree programme which would have given me a very detailed and dense data base on student adaptation from which to work. However, the pragmatic concerns of combining a Ph.D research programme alongside full-time teaching and administrative

responsibilities with limited research remission, meant that I could not afford to spend longer than one year collecting the data. The first year of the B.Ed degree programme thus became the principal focus for study mainly because this was the point at which I believed the women would be most able to articulate the impact of the changes which becoming a student teacher was having upon their lives. As with any new venture, job or life experience, the initiation into student discourse and culture would be likely to be felt most strongly in the early weeks of their first term. This year of the course also had its own clearly defined beginning of induction which was followed by a series of teaching practices, a varied range of theoretical and workshop programmes with written examinations and a school practice assessment in the final part of the summer term. There was, in my view, a sufficient range of typical B.Ed student experiences in this first year to justify its focus for the case study. However, the data collection process actually began in the term prior to the women's enrolment on the course. This had two advantages: from the women's perspective, it ensured that they knew at least one face on their first day of the course; from my point of view it meant that I could conduct the second interview in the knowledge that we had already met, that some issues for further discussion had already been identified and that no time need be lost on preliminary familiarisation routines.

Pragmatic necessity and intrinsic interest thus featured prominently both in the selection of the case study focus and the field methods which were used to gather the data. Interest was a two-way concern underpinned by feminist values which held that both researcher and the researched should derive benefit from the study.

The Purposes Of A Case Study

The purpose of this case study has been to heighten understanding about the processes of adaptation experienced by a group of mature women B.Ed undergraduates. Revealing the empirical reality of what it felt like to be a student teacher involved an examination of the womens's subjective meanings and interpretations which went beyond the public culture of the college into the private world of their family lives. A central perspective for most of the women was their day-to-day reality as mothers and wives and any changes that were made to accommodate their student reality, concomitantly affected their husbands, children and family routines. A principal task of the case study has been to offer an ethnographic account of the way in which change was experienced in the cultural contexts of the college, placement schools and the family. Becoming a student for these women was problematic and understanding what made it problematic meant searching for a language which adequately described the way in which tensions, paradoxes and conflicts were played out in the many aspects of

their lives. Demonstrating and making explicit the interrelatedness of the women's life histories, identity, structure and higher education in shaping the course of student socialization, has been the main challange of this case study.

Because the central purpose of the study was to offer a sociocultural interpretation of the data, it meets the criteria for an *ethnographic* case study. According to Wolcott (1980) concern with the cultural context is what sets this type of study apart from other qualitative research. Analytic descriptions which reconstruct the women's symbolic meanings, common sense understandings and patterns of social interaction make it possible for, 'ethnographies (to) recreate for the reader the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors of some group of people' (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984, p.2). The use of the ethnographic techniques of interviewing, life histories, personal diaries and participant observation helped to produce an account which made it possible to grasp the reality of the daily journey which the women now had to make between the differing cultural contexts of their lives. How the women made sense of these cultures in terms of the demands they placed upon them to cope with their respective routines and procedures, is revealed through their definition of the situation as it was articulated during the interviews. This, in turn, was rendered into a conceptual analysis which helped to

give their 'shared beliefs and folk knowledge' a shape and structure in the form of a written narrative which brought together the various strands of their student adaptation.

Platt (1988) wrote that the kind of case study that is eventually produced will, to a large extent, reflect the intellectual background of the researcher and this, in turn will influence the function of the case study. Thus a psychologist, for example, would present a different kind of case from a political scientist. My academic and professional background in education and sociology has influenced both the concepts used in the analysis and the kind of language I have used to write the case study. The intellectual training which I have received in both academic discipines has predisposed me towards a preference for writing which illuminates and explains rather than that which merely describes and recounts. Many years of teaching children and students have instilled in me an imperative, regrettably not always realised, to write in a style which communicates clearly and directly and which renders opaque abstractions and complex concepts, accessible to its intended audience. An important purpose of my case study has been to present a coherent account of insights and understandings about a set of educational and sociological problems and processes which were true to the women's experiences of student adaptation. Such an account has involved the construction of concepts and themes which have helped to

shed a different light on a familiar process. This has been set down in a form of writing which sets out to communicate to an academic audience of educationalists and sociologists, students, educational policy makers and the women in the research group. However, I also have a strong interest and professional background in English literature and the theatre. Novels and plays on the human condition have always formed an important part of my understanding about what matters to people, what drives them to create and destroy and how they relate to one another and the society in which they live. It mattered therefore, that the study provided scope for the women to speak for themselves. The study is pervaded thoughout with accounts of human interest which reveal some personal moments of triumph and despair. Balancing the tensions between analysis and biographical detail can be problematic, particularly in a piece of work which is to be presented as a doctoral thesis. If the former is allowed to dominate, the result might be a distorted and elliptical account which lost its claim to social authenticity; if the latter predominated, the account might lean towards the descriptive and the trivial at the expense of analytical insight. Platt (1988) recognised this dilemma in the presentation of case study material. She believed that the functions of the case study fell under two main headings; the rhetorical and the logical. The rhetorical functions are those which relate to the presentation of the argument and

the logical functions, those which are essential to the formal argument of the study. Aesthetic appeal and persuasion are two examples of rhetorical devices which may be used by social scientists in writing case studies. Platt argues that aesthetic appeal may be persuasive in the sense that case study material can provide stories of human interest which make for enjoyable reading to a potentially wide audience. However, her point is that accessible material should not 'be bought at an unacceptable price of sacrifice of systematic presentation of evidence,' (Platt, 1988, p.7). Whilst acknowledging her own preference for that which can be analysed, Platt does not deny the value of rhetorical functions which case study material can perform. What matters to her is effective communication of a good argument and a judicious use of rhetorical material in ways 'which support, rather than override the logical grounds for the conclusions reached' (1988, p.8). What is unacceptable to Platt are rhetorical accounts of people's lives which do not make clear to the reader the logic of what is going on. She therefore stresses the need for the use of self-conscious, systematic procedures in the interpretation of data and, in her peroration, she urges case students 'to become social scientists as well as poets' (p.20).

Platt's position on the writing of case studies accords closely with my own academic and literary preference for analyses which are presented within a readable, humanistic account which make use of the rhetorical

devices of a literary text or novel to engage its readers. Indeed, in a comment about the influence of post-structuralism on ethnography in recent years, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) refer to the blurring of boundaries between different genres of writing, especially that between literary and technical writing.

> This has led to recognition of the fact that the language used by ethnographers in their writing is not a transparent medium allowing us to see reality through it, but rather a construction that draws on many of the rhetorical strategies used by journalists or even novelists.
>
> (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, pp.13-14).

In my desire to be both 'social scientist and poet' in the presentation of data, my intention will be to get to the heart of the interpretation which is, according to Geertz (1975), the essence of a good interpretation of anything, whether it be 'a poem, person, history, ritual, institution or society' (p.18). Thus, in my wish to say something meaningful about the lives of the women in my study I am as likely to call upon my sociological and literary imagination as a source for understanding as I am to call upon theory and the power of analysis. My interpretation of the way in which the student experience affected the women's lives over the course of a year has therefore drawn upon a number of differing intellectual, professional, literary and personal sources which have inevitably influenced and informed the content and style of the narrative I have used to present this case study. This fusion

of autobiography and sociological analysis is not new; it has, for example, been acknowledged by Burgess (1985a) in a paper on the research process which evolved in his study of a Roman Catholic comprehensive school and, more recently, by Cotterill and Letherby (1993) who argue that doing feminist qualitative research involves 'weaving the stories of both the researcher and the researched' (p.67). In this sense, feminist research is concerned with the documenting of many lives:

> Autobiographies and biographies not only record the life of one individual, they are in a very real sense documents of many lives. Moreover, they are relevant not just to one branch of literature but also to academic empirical research within the discipline of sociology.
>
> (Cotterill and Letherby, 1993, p.68).

A central purpose in my case study of mature women student teachers has therefore been to faithfully record, in an accessible narrative, the interaction of student adaptation with the lives of the women and their families. Of equal importance is that the recounting of these personal histories has been done in a way which supports theoretical insight without acting as its substitute. In so doing, the foundation has been laid for a clearly developed sociological analysis.

Theoretical Orientation

An important consideration in case study research is the question of how theory relates to the problem being investigated, how it makes

sense of the data and integrates the various pieces of information into a whole. The issue of which theoretical orientation should be used depends largely on the paradigm which has shaped the thinking and the research in the first place. The decision to use a qualitative research approach significantly determined the methods which were used to conduct the case study and these have been described elsewhere. What is more debateable is the point at which the researcher's theoretical position is worked out. Should it be formulated in advance of the research or as the research proceeds? There would seem to be little agreement among sociologists about this question. Ball (1984), for example, writes that theoretical preparation is secondary to the business of getting on and doing the fieldwork. In support of his position he cites Rock (1979) who wrote:

> I feel that the fieldworker needs only a minimum of theoretical orientation before he begins his observations ... he may be positively handicapped if he postpones his fieldwork until he feels that he has a thorough grounding in theory.
>
> (p.213).

For a number of reasons, I did not take this minimalist approach to theoretical preparation. Unlike Ball or Rock, I did not feel able to enter the field without having done some productive thinking and reading before I began to interview the women students. Not to have laid at least some theoretical foundations would have left me as vulnerable as a novice sailor setting out in uncharted seas with no map

or crew to guide me. I may have eventually found my way and discovered some rich, unexplored sights in the process, but I might just as easily have become hopelessly lost with no alternative but to turn back to do the planning and groundwork which would have been better done in the first place. I also felt heavily constrained by the limited time which was available to me to carry out the investigation and the nature of the research problem itself which was to find out how mature women adapted to the student role. Had I not done some preparatory reading on studies of student socialisation and the historical position of women in higher education, I would have entered the field 'intellectually empty handed' (Geertz, 1975, p.26). This would, I believed, have led to a lack of clarity in the questions I wanted to ask in the first crucial weeks of the women's experience as full-time students. I could not afford to risk ending up in a position where I realised, too late, that I had not asked the kind of questions which led to responses about the early processes of student adaptation but had merely generated a surfeit of data which was directed to nothing in particular. Loss of key data at this initial stage would have led to the research project foundering or, to its postponement for a further year with a different cohort of students. I could not afford to squander time in this way and felt fully justified in the mental energy I had expended beforehand working out the basis for a set of directing ideas and incohate concepts

which would guide the early weeks of my research. This 'directing framework', far from 'handicapping' my tentative and nervous first days in the field, gave me some reassuring theoretical 'footholds' from which came the basis for others. Contrary to the potential strait-jacketing of ideas, it served to limber up and train the intellectual 'muscles' for the concentrated effort which lay ahead in the data-gathering phase. I am thus more closely aligned to Geertz's position on the role of theory than to Ball or Rock's. Geertz (1975) believed that if we are to be in touch with the lives of strangers we must be able to recognise and understand the complex conceptual structures which are present in our data. The task of the ethnographer, according to Geertz, is to make clear to the reader the layers of inference and meaning in what he describes as a 'faded manuscript' (1975, p.10). The role of theory in his view is to provide a vocabulary in which these conceptual complexities can be expressed or 'thickly described'. He would seem to have little patience with ethnographers who duck the theoretical challenge by inferring, rather than stating and formulating theories.

> The besetting sin of interpretive approaches to anything - is that they tend to resist conceptual articulation and thus escape systematic modes of assessment.
>
> (Geertz, 1975, p.24).

I thus began the fieldwork with a rough-hewn, directing hypothesis

which had been influenced by Lacey's (1977) study on the socialization of teachers, the available material on the position of women and higher education and a number of reflexive accounts of the research process written by contemporary ethnographers of schooling and teachers' lives (cf Burgess, 1984, 1985; Ball, 1984, 1991; Nias, 1991; Pollard, 1985), inter alia. Their experiences alerted me to the close interrelationship which exists in most exemplary ethnography between the researcher, methodology and the building of theory. Whilst I was conscious of letting 'the line of thought dip deep into the stream' (Woolf, 1929, p.103) before beginning to collect the data, I was equally aware of the need not to allow myself to become too harnessed to one, particular perspective with the consequent risk of premature foreclosure and loss of flexibility of thought and interpretation. Some useful middle ground between the polarities of Rock's and Geertz's position is to be found in Malinowski's notion of the 'foreshadowed problem' which can only be brought to the field after considerable theoretical study. According to Malinowski (1961) the possession of foreshadowed problems are an essential part of the ethnographer's repertoire which will not only provide direction at the data gathering stage but will also be indispensible at the point of data interpretation and analysis:

> Preconceived ideas are pernicious in any scientific work, but the foreshadowed problems are the main endowment of a scientific thinker, and these problems are first revealed to the observer by his theoretical studies.
>
> (Malinowski, 1961, pp.8-9).

For Malinowski, the facts and the theory are in a constant dynamic relationship with each other both before and during the research process. More recently, Hargreaves (1985) made a similar point in his argument for closer links between macro and micro levels of enquiry within the sociology of education. Here, he stressed the need for greater continuity between theory and empirical research. 'Theory and evidence, ... do have something to say to one another. They should be allowed to do so' (p.35).

The achievement of a dynamic relationship between theory and evidence became an important challange in my case study of mature women students but I was initially very unclear about how I would make this happen. In my early introduction to sociology I had read Durkheim on education, religion and morality, Bernstein on pedagogy, language and curriculum codes and Mills on intellectual craftsmanship and the power structures of American society. Later, whilst reading for my Masters degree, I was introduced to Marxist sociology, Habermas and the Frankfurt school of critical theory by the late Tom Bottomore and to substantive and grounded theory by Colin Lacey, at the University of Sussex. I owed an enormous intellectual debt to these

ideas even though their differing perspectives and sociological traditions were often in conflict with one another. When it came to writing an ethnography of student socialisation many of the 'macro' theories of schooling and the social structure which had informed my sociological imagination over several years, continued to pervade my thoughts. I could not countenance the production of an empirical analysis which, in Sharp's (1980) words offered 'low level hypotheses' which ultimately did 'little more than reproduce a more articulated version of common-sense'. However, I was also aware that attempts to make the links between micro and macro levels of analysis in studies of schooling whilst interesting, had not been entirely successful (cf Sharp & Green, 1975; Willis, 1977). My overriding aim was to try and produce an understanding of the women as social beings in which:

> the emotions of fear and hatred and love and rage, in all their varieties, must be understood in close and continual reference to the social biography and the social context in which they are experienced and expressed.
>
> (Mills, 1959, p.179.)

This appeared to be a practical and possible imperative which avoided the insuperable problems involved in attempting a macro-micro integration. A further possibility which fits closely with Mills's exhortation, is Hammersley's (1980) argument for work focused predominantly at one of four levels: the micro-formal, micro-substantive, macro-formal and macro-substantive. Whilst the research

focus lies predominantly in one of these areas, it can and should remain 'senstive to work in other traditions pitched at other levels' (Hargreaves, 1985, p.35). This proposal offered a way out of the difficulties I had initially anticipated. It would help to achieve a dynamic relationship between theory and evidence which remained true to the subjective experiences of the mature women students without leaving out of the account the context of wider social forces from which their subjective meanings were partly derived. Using Hammersley's formula, I could situate my theoretical analysis within the micro-substantive level whilst acknowledging the role of macro-formal levels of analysis in explaining why processes of adapatation were differentially experienced. Thus, for example, I could offer an interactionist perspective on the women's coping strategies in their attempts to balance the pressures of family and academic responsibilities, which also took account of the sexual division of labour. However, Hargreaves (1985) also pointed out the gap which continues to exist between 'the world of small scale face-to-face interaction, on the one hand, and vast social structures of immense proportions on the other (p.41). Such a gap could be bridged, he argued with the support of what Merton (1968) describes as 'theories of the middle range'. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967) middle-range theory falls between 'the minor working hypotheses of everyday life and the all-inclusive grand theories' (p.33). Between classroom

interaction and the capitalist state there exist, what Hargreaves describes as 'a whole range of intermediary processes and structures' (1985, p.41). An example might include teacher coping strategies and teacher culture. His point is that social structures are seldom studied empirically because they remain speculative and inferred. If social structures were to be studied by investigating the interactions which take place *outside* the classroom in policy departments or Local Education Authority offices, for example, then it might be possible to understand how social and political constraints were filtered down and negotiated at the level of the school and classroom. Similarly, an examination of the coping strategies used by the women in my case study showed that they were a consequence of interpersonal interactions in the public sphere of the college and the private domain of the family. They were also directly influenced by the social factors of redundancy, ill health, single parenthood and potential house repossession. Political, economic and social constraints were made real and manifest to the women and their families through their interactions in the 'intermediary institutions and processes' of social security benefit offices, building societies, local authority grant departments and banks. The notion of coping strategy is thus a powerful example of a middle range theoretical concept which provides a bridge between macro and micro levels of analysis.

Hargreaves' insightful argument on macro-micro problems

helped to clarify and situate my theoretical orientation within a framework which provided scope for the interplay of macro sociological traditions within an empirical, interactionist perspective, without sacrificing its claim to social authenticity. More explicitly, I was attempting to build a theoretical analysis which was grounded within the overlappping categories of middle range and substantive theory, a level of theory which Merriam (1988) defines as 'being closely related to real-life situations' (p.57).

So far, I have discussed the basis for my theoretical orientation but the way in which theory developed out of the data collection to form an analytic whole has not yet been considered.

Theoretical Analysis

In a discussion of the characteristics of qualitative research projects, Burgess (1985b) states that:

> the research is conducted within a theoretical framework. While there may only be a small number of questions to orientate the study, further questions may arise during the course of the investigation. (pp.4-5).

Whilst I found my preparatory framework of considerable benefit at the early days of fieldwork, I was anxious not to become a prisoner of it and made a conscious decision to remain open and receptive to issues and questions which might arise once I began the fieldwork. I also tried to be alert to the possibility that some of the questions I believed

were relevant to my research inquiry, might not prove to be of interest to the women. I quickly discovered that there was some truth in this and the need to be open to the novel and the unexpected (cf Burgess, 1985, 1988; Ball, 1984; Hammersley, 1984) was forcibly brought home to me in the first few interviews. The key questions concerned the factors which led to the women's decision to teach and the reasons for applying for teacher training at this point in their lives. Because I was admissions tutor at the time, I also wanted to hear about their perceptions of the advisory and formal interviews which they had all experienced by this time at Riverdale College and, after some preliminary conversational exchanges, I generally began with a question on this issue. After two or three interviews I sensed, that compared with other parts of the first interview, this was a topic that did not engage the women's interest. I therefore put it lower down the interview agenda and allowed greater time for the women to talk about the factors which led up to their decision to teach. This question triggered an animated response which often led to a sustained narrative about their childhood, parents, schooling, early aspirations and educational opportunities. When I re-read these biographical accounts in the data both during and after its collection, I began to appreciate its significance in the research. The decision to teach came as a result of the intersection of several events in the women's lives which included a

perception that motherhood would, at some point in the near future, no longer occupy so much of their time. This was often expressed as a need for something beyond childcare and domesticity as well as a desire for a satisfying career. Because their decision to teach and their subsequent socialization into studenthood was so inextricably bound up with their lives as a whole, the life course concept became a major interlinkling theme in the analysis. After I had transcribed and read the first data set of interviews, I realised that the flatness in many of the women's responses to my query about their reactions to the B.Ed interviews was because it had passed 'the shelf life' in their thinking. They had achieved this first hurdle and now wanted to move on and talk about the course, their hopes, fears and expectations of it. Their perceptions about the B.Ed interviews had been *my* agenda, not theirs. The life course concept might not have emerged had I controlled the interview agenda too tightly. This experience provided a salutory lesson on the merits of participant observation and the principles of symbolic interactionism on which this method is founded. I had, fortunately, placed sufficient trust in interactionist perspectives to 'hear' what the women were saying about their definition of the situation. Ball (1984) makes the point succinctly:

> The participant observer is committed to becoming embedded in the perspectives of those who inhabit the socio-cultural world that is to be described and analysed. The prime concern is to share in a direct, immediate and non-presumptive sense the pheonomenal givens of these actors in order to construct an account of their cultural setting.
>
> (p. 72).

Subsequent interview agendas were constructed out of the issues and concerns raised by the women in the previous interview. Sometimes, important new questions or areas of ambiguity which needed clarifying, arose at this point. These, together with the key concerns of each new term, such as school experience, examinations or a new programme of study for example, became the next agenda (see appendix 2). The process of analysis occurred during and after data collection, during the writing up of the case study and continued to be refined, and modified as new insights developed during the several revisions and re-drafts of parts of the thesis. Analysis was thus a dynamic and ongoing process which spanned several years of reading, studying and thinking. The overall shape of the analysis was subject to continual change and distillation; insights and new conceptual threads increased in direct proportion to reading and writing and, on occasions, relationships between themes and concepts which had not previously occurred to me, came into being as I wrote. It seemed at times, as though the act of writing breathed fresh life into the analysis which in its rudimentary, scribbled note form, had sometimes lain inert before I started to

compose on the screen. Burgess's (1985a) comments about data and theorizing being 'intimately related' and which do not follow a staged and linear pattern (1985, p.5), spoke directly to my experience as did Bechhofer's remarks about the research process being 'a messy interaction between the conceptual and the empirical world, deduction and induction occurring at the same time' (1974, p.73).

Theory building is therefore recursive and heuristic; it pervades the entire research process. However, a structure and order has to be imposed upon this process at some stage if the analysis is to develop into a cohesive and integrated whole. Articulating the process of *how* theory is generated and 'discovered' (Burgess,1984), requires considerable reflexivity on the part of the researcher, a good memory, a meticulously kept research diary [5] and an ability to distance oneself from the data in order to move up 'from the empirical trenches to a more conceptual overview of the landscape' (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p.228). Insights, hunches and tenuous links between one concept and another have to be pinned down, named and categorised if they are to be debated and accessed by other interested researchers. The business of coding and classifying the amorphous mass of ideas which I had carried around in my head during waking and sleeping hours, was central to the task of making a further contribution to knowledge about a familar social act which could then be shared with a range of academic

audiences. If I was clear about the purpose of this difficult intellectual hurdle, I was in considerable doubt about how I should develop the analysis. I took some comfort from the words of Goetz and LeCompte who acknowledge the difficulty and ambiguity of this process:

> 'going beyond the data into a never-never land of inference' is a difficult task for most qualitative researchers because they are too close to the data, unable to articulate how the study is significant, and unable to shift into a speculative mode of thinking.
>
> (1984, p.198, cited in Merriam, 1988, p.141).

Conscious of the fact that I was, indeed, too close to the data, I began by psychologically distancing myself from it and started to write down all the categories and potential concepts that were present in the data. I was working within Glaser and Strauss's (1967) notion of grounded theory and, whilst I had come to the fieldwork with a basic theoretical orientation, I expected to derive the main body of theory inductively, from the data. The act of thinking about the development of theory by consciously searching for it in the data and playing with possible ideas, helped me to move beyond the descriptive to a point where I began to discern underlying patterns and connections between one set of ideas and another. This stage in the process was triggered by a random listing of rather mundane categories, much as Ball (1991) had described in a paper on his analytical procedures in *The Micropolitics of the School* (1987). For example, my original list included: educational opportunities; lack of academic confidence; perceptions about school

experience; the influence of significant others; juggling housework and academic work; worries about finance; revision strategies; first days at college; school strategies; domestic burdens; coping strategies; writing the first essay; childcare arrangements; guilt; changing routines; family conflict, and so on. I then went through the entire data set with highlighter pens and marked in different colours, the occasions in the transcripts where incidents of each of these categories occurred. I made several photocopies of the interview transcripts and cut out the sections I had highlighted. These pieces of data were then re-read in isolation from their contextual narrative. Sometimes this procedure revealed other categories and new hypotheses so I went back to the transcripts to search for material which supported the new categories. This process continued until I no longer found different things and when I felt I had reached what Glaser and Strauss (1967) called 'theoretical saturation'. I then grouped the various bits of data into broad classificatory types so that, for example, revision, school and coping strategies were placed together as were the categories of guilt, domestic burden and family conflict. This proceeded until I had grouped all the categories into about ten sets which gave me a potential source of ten emergent concepts. Using Glaser and Strauss's method of 'constant comparison' I then sifted through the four interview transripts and highlighted incidents of the new groupings, which at that stage, I

had simply coded with ten letters of the alphabet. These were also cut out and laid on large sheets of paper labelled with the corresponding letter of the alphabet. I then read them where they lay on the sheets of paper. It was at this point of 'progressive focusing' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) that the grouped categories began to form themselves into concepts so that for example, the 'strategies' group became 'coping strategies' and the 'guilt/domestic burden' group became 'gender' and so on until six main concepts had emerged. Where there were insufficient data pieces to justify the weight of a conceptual category, they were discarded. In reality however, things are seldom this straightforward and this part of the theoretical analysis proved to be the most taxing and unnerving of the entire research project. It was several months before the last part of the inductive analysis fell into place. A substantial amount of reading and thinking had to be done before I felt sufficiently confident to name the concepts which were to form the theoretical framework which would then drive the empirical narrative during the writing up of the analysis.

The linking together of the concepts to form themes which explained and made sense of the data did not occur until the writing of the thesis was well underway. This was because I initially wrote the chapters out of sequence and in isolation from each other. The writing of tentative first drafts of chapters whilst the data collection was still in

progress, was an important discipline which forced me to begin analysing the data at an early stage. This often served to sharpen the focus of subsequent interviews and, in some cases, redirected it to an important new line of inquiry which might have been missed had I left the analysis until the data gathering was complete. However, the themes and concepts did not begin to form an analytic whole until I had completed at least one draft of all the chapters. Once I had read them all through to see whether the relationships between the main concepts were clear or obscure, I was able to begin the process of constructing a narrative which would present the data in the form of a coherent case study in which theory and evidence 'spoke' to each other.

Organising the sociological concepts into the empirical chapter themes was less problematic since I was able to use the chronology of the four interviews to order the way in which the thesis would unfold as outlined in the final section of the Introduction. However, the narrative continued to need moulding into shape over several drafts before it finally moved forward in a way which made the connections between the concepts and themes clear and progressive.

I am indebted to Ball (1991) and Merriam (1988) for helping me articulate the analysis and construction of this theoretical framework. Without the benefit of their accessible accounts and practical wisdom, this part of the chapter might have remained embedded and inaccessible

in my mind.

The Role of Researcher

Acker has commented that, 'Many of us study aspects of our autobiographies partially disguised as a "detached" choice of an interesting problem' (1981, p.96). Whilst autobiographical introspection had not been a motivating force behind the case study, there is a degree of congruence between Acker's statement and my position as researcher, even though it is an avowedly ex post facto realisation. I have been a mature student for several years in three different institutions of higher education. Academia has long held a source of fascination for me and I remain puzzled by the relative lack of interest shown by sociologists in universities and colleges as institutions worthy of socio-cultural study. I realised, in retrospect, that my preoccupation with them lay in the fact that I had not been sufficiently assertive in my desire to go to university and read medicine when I left school and went, instead, to a teacher's training college; a decision which I have often regretted. The years I have spent in various universities since qualifying as a primary school teacher could reasonably be described as a form of deferred gratification in a quest for the academic 'holy grail' I had not achieved when I was younger. My autobiographical affinity with the mature women students served to

sensitise me to their accounts of lost and delayed educational opportunity and their rekindled appetite for learning. I was intimately acquainted with the reality of combining full-time study with a demanding job, domestic and family responsibilities. I was also attuned to their doubts about academic confidence and the consequent experience of pain and pleasure when intellectual success was denied or confirmed. This degree of personal empathy and mutual understanding could be interpreted as 'dangerous bias' (Oakley, 1981, p.58) but I believed it would strengthen the relationship between the women and myself and provide the foundation for a research experience which would, in line with feminist principles, be of benefit and value to the women I was studying (cf Riddell, 1989b; Gaskell, 1992).

Mutual trust and respect were integral aspects of my relationship with the women and I doubt whether they would have talked so freely and openly about some of the more intimate and sensitive parts of their lives without the consistent demonstration of these qualities. I thought very highly of the women and was impressed by their energy and commitment in the face of some exceptionally debilitating personal and domestic circumstances. I admired their fortitude, tenacity and determination to see the course through when seemingly impossible odds were stacked against them. I do not doubt that the positive regard I had for them seeped through the discourse of the interview and

thus had a strong part to play in their perception of the interviews as a 'good' and beneficial experience. Of equal importance was the part this played in ensuring a rich seam of interview data.

There now exists a growing literature which supports and justifies this approach to ethnography enquiry (cf Oakley, 1981; Finch, 1984; Burgess, 1984; Cotterill & Letherby, 1993). ·Oakley (1981) was one of the first to argue that it was impossible for interviewers to establish trust without revealing anything of their own personality and concerns. Moreover, Riddell (1989b) argued that 'it is morally unacceptable for a feminist researcher to engage in research with other women which sets out to objectify their experiences' (p.84). Writing about the same issue, Wilkins (1993) makes a case for the creative and analytical use of emotions and feelings in academic work. 'Properly understood emotional responses have a sensitising, cognitive function which alerts us to the meanings and behaviours of others' (p.96). She urges the use of what she calls a 'sophisticated sensibility' (p.98) as a valuable and interpretive research resource which has the potential to uncover important sociological insights. The cultivation of a sophisticated sensibility on my part served to underpin the tenets of participant observation which uses to the full, the advantages of the human being as instrument (Merriam, 1988). Thinking consciously about the women's perspectives helped to clear the mind of other impending pressures and

enabled me to display a key constituent of successful interviewing: a simple 'willingness to sit quietly and listen' (Thompson, 1988, p.196).

The researcher's role in ethnographic investigations is often given a pivotal role in the achievement of fertile data, a sound methodology and a successful outcome. Burgess (1989b) for example, writes that: 'at the heart of the ethnographic enterprise is the relationship between the researcher and the researched...' (p.60). Freilich (1977) went so far as to place the full weight of responsibility for the outcome of the research project squarely on the researcher's shoulders...'He is the project: his actions will make the field trip either a success or a failure' (p.32). This presents an awesome task for the novice researcher, particularly when the research setting invokes several roles at once, as it did in my case. In the year of the data collection, I was, as far as the women were concerned, researcher, education tutor, admissions tutor, school experience tutor, personal tutor and sympathetic female listener. This multi-faceted researcher role was both a strength and a weakness in the research project and I found that I had very limited control over the extent to which the boundaries between the various roles frequently became blurred. Burgess (1984) rightly points out that such 'roles are not "played" or "taken" but are products of the situations in which researchers find themselves' (p.261). It was a strength insofar as I was able to observe the women in several different contexts beyond the

interviews. I taught them on several different programmes, supervised them in school, was personal tutor to four of them and had admitted most of them. This meant that I was able to deploy at least two of Gold's (1958) 'master roles' in participant observation. When I was interviewing the women I was unequivocally the participant as observer, but when I was teaching or observing them on a school placement, I was more detached and able to take an observer as participant role. Whether or not I explicitly used the data which I gleaned from these other settings, it inevitably filtered into the data base and added to the stock of knowledge I was building up about the women's adaptation to the student role. This clearly presented an ethical dilemma. If I used data for research purposes which was gained during the course of a 'non-research' activity like supervising a school placement, for example, I would have breached the trust of the women by using one of my professional roles for a dual purpose without their prior knowledge or consent. Exploitation, intentional or unintentional, of my professional advantage in these situations, could not be countenanced. I therefore sought the women's permission to use any data which I gained outside of formally agreed research settings. Whilst I rarely made use of these extra-research opportunities, the problem of how far additional, 'non-contractural' data seeped into the research frame remains an unresolved 'grey area' (cf Burgess 1989b). A weakness in the chimeric nature of

my research role lay in the potential conflict which existed between my professional and research roles. An incidence of this conflict arose on one occasion when I had to assess the school experience performance of four of the women in the research group. One of the women had perfomed satisfactorily in the classroom but had produced an insubstantial and disordered school file which counted for fifty per cent of the overall assessment. I had to write a detailed commentary on both classroom performance and the school file which narrowly met the criteria for a pass mark. During the de-briefing tutorial the woman concerned displayed visible signs of disappointment and distress at the comments and mark for her file. She also made it clear that she had expected a 'better' mark and was dismayed by the critical comments I had written. Whilst I was able to fully justify my professional assessment, I was painfully aware that she felt betrayed by someone in whom she had confided some intimate, personal family difficulties during a previous research interview. The tutorial was a tense occasion and, given the circumstances, there was little scope for amelioriating palliatives. I had to live in the hope that time and the next interview would heal the wound. This example serves to illustrate the intrinsic vulnerability of a researcher who has to combine the incompatible role of sympathetic listener with that of assessor. Another weakness in this role assumed even greater proportions than the incident just recounted.

This concerned a perception on the part of one or two women that my research relationship with them gave them priority of access to my time outside of formal research or teaching time. This was demonstrated by frequent, unannounced visits to my office on the rare occasions I happened to be there, to listen to problems in relation to their studies or their personal lives. Had my role been limited to professional boundaries, I would have dealt swiftly and cursorily with these interruptions. However, because of the spill-over of the research role into other aspects of my professional work, I felt an obligation to respond sympathetically to the women, however pressured I was. They had given generously of their time and willingly admitted me to their lives and I felt I owed them something of myself. In the end, I learned to accept that part of the 'price' I had to pay for successful ethnography, was additional demands upon my time which continued for years after the data collection had been completed.

A major difficulty in conducting a case study in an educational institution with which the researcher is intimately familiar, is how to make it 'strange' in a way which does not accept the structures and processes of the social context as 'givens', but renders them problematic and subject to scrutiny (cf Burgess, 1984; Spindler and Spindler, 1982). I had worked at Riverdale College for nine years and had responsibility for several taught course programmes within the School of Education

and, because I also carried a significant administrative portfolio of duties, I had an insider's knowledge of the college's committee structures and internal bureaucracy. This detailed, working knowledge of the institution posed a considerable challenge to me in terms of making the familiar strange. Burgess (1984) advised that researchers in this position need to ask questions about the activities which go on in the social setting they are researching. If this is the key to unlocking new knowledge about familiar events and activities, more needs to be known about the type of questions these should be. My view was that I had to engage in a conscious act of cognitive distancing in order to intellectually situate myself in a state of 'unknowingness' about a social setting I worked in. If I could temporarily suspend knowledge about my perceptions of being both student and teacher of students, for example, I would be more likely to ask the kind of questions which would produce responses which were true to the women students' perspective. I decided to mentally shift my perspective to that of a curious and interested 'stranger-observer' within the participant observer framework. Adopting this mental stance helped me to ask questions which problematised and deconstructed the student experience. For example, in seeking to understand how the women became students I asked them when they first felt like a student and how this state of being manifested itself. Focused and specific

questions of this kind produced some vivid accounts of emergent, adaptive processes which often provided further details which could then be probed and followed up. On occasions, I adopted the metaphorical stance of a detective searching for clues about how the women learned to become students. The act of suspending knowledge in order to step outside what was known and familiar also had to be sustained during subsequent readings of the transribed data so that areas of ambiguity and new lines of inquiry could be taken up in future interviews. The mental effort required to enact the familiar/strange dichotomy was, at one and the same time, an exhausting and schizophrenic activity (Merriam, 1988) which sometimes took several hours to recover from but when achieved, produced some rewarding insights and understandings.

One of the charges often made against ethnographic research is its methodological vulnerability to investigator bias and distortion with regard to how data are recorded, interpreted and selected. This often leads to questions about the reliability and validity of the data (cf Merriam, 1988; Burgess, 1984; Ball, 1993). These concerns have certainly been present in my own work. One of the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative methodology is that it is, as Gouldner (1971) argued, 'commonly infused with ideologically resonant assumptions about what the social world is, who the sociologist is, and what the

nature of the relation between them is' (pp.50-1). The relationship between the researcher and the research process is, as I have discussed throughout this section, inextricably linked. Ultimately, the strengths have to be weighed against the weaknesses and a judgement has to be made about the degree to which the account reveals new understandings about familiar problems in a manner which faithfully represents the social authenticity of the problem being investigated. Quality, as well as range of data, is one criterion by which a judgement can be made about the validity of the case study and the use of more than one method of collecting data is one way of strengthening claims to validity. This form of 'triangulation' (Denzin, 1970) was present in my case study in the form of personal diaries which the women kept for a prescribed period of time. This data provided further supportive information on the lived reality of what it was like to be a student alonside the responsibilities of mother and wife. The availabilty of four sets of interview data on the same group of women reduced the potential for unreliable accounts because of memory loss or insufficient data from which to generate an account of beginning student socialization.

Another method for achieving a check on validity is to offer the transcribed data to the respondents for verification before an interpretation and analysis is made. Stenhouse (1985) made a regular practice of this as well as offering his respondents an opportunity to

remove any material they did not wish to be used. Whilst I did not adopt this practice, mainly because of time constraints and a belief that the women would not welcome the additional burden of reading through lengthy transcripts, I did engage in a process of what Ball (1991) calls 'ad hoc respondent validation'. As drafts of each empirical chapter were written I made copies available to the women for reading and comment in a central location within the School of Education. Not all the women chose to read them, a minority took the trouble to write a commentary on their reactions and others gave me verbal feedback. Two women, in particular, regularly sought me out to see if the next chapter had been written and chased me up if I did not fulfil my agreement to have it available by a specified date. Of those who gave either written or verbal commentaries, I was heartened to learn that they believed them to accurately reflect the concerns, difficulties and processes of change they were experiencing. Most encouraging of all, were the women who wrote to me about how reading the chapters had helped them to make sense of what was happening to them as well as give them a sense of perspective about the conflicts and rapid change of events which they were experiencing. Reading about other women's experiences was frequently referred to as 'interesting' and 'surprising' and of benefit in helping them to contextualise their own struggles and successes. Two women who were going through marital difficulties,

wrote to tell me that reading the accounts of how they had survived these difficulties, gave them renewed hope about their ability to cope and strengthened their resolve to see the course through to the end. Besides offering a useful, ad hoc validation of the data, the women's responses to the chapters gave a clear indication that their involvement in the research had been beneficial and rewarding.

This chapter has examined the relationship between the research approach, theoretical analysis and the researcher in defining the scope and purpose of the case study. This relationship is now put to use in the first empirical chapter with the intention of revealing the biographical and socio-historical factors which lay behind the women's decision to teach.

NOTES

(1) The entry qualifications of a B.Ed degree at the time of writing, were passes in five subjects, two of which should be mathematics and English and two at A' level. If candidates were 'mature', i.e. over 21 years of age, one, rather than two A' levels, could be considered as an appropriate entry qualification. Alternatively, mature candidates could take an Access course as a pre-entry qualification. BTEC (British Technical and Educational Council) diplomas and/or certificates were also an acceptable A' level equivalent. The women in the research group varied widely in the type of pre-entry qualifications they achieved. One student chose to take two A' levels, even though one would have sufficed; another had passed an Open University Foundation Course which the validating university deemed to be the equivalent to two A' levels; one had entered via a 'special entry' arrangement meant that she had to submit evidence of recent academic study. In her case, two essays were submitted from an unfinished Higher National Diploma course. Four students had taken one A' level in order to qualify; seven women entered via approved Access courses but the largest group (10), came with 'unconditional' entry status, which meant that they already possessed one or more A' levels and were not required to undertake any further course of qualifying enry examination. However, several of the women in this latter group, anxious about the length of time which had elapsed since they had last undertaken formal study, enrolled on 'Fresh Start' of 'Return to Study' courses in order to update their study skills. Thus most of the women in the research group had undertaken some form of study prior to their enrolment on the B.Ed. I have therefore inferred that a form of student adaptation had already taken place before their induction as full-time student teachers.

The lengths to which some of the women went to prepare for full-time higher education, gives some idea of their commitment to the course as well indicating the degree to which they were insecure about how they would fare academically, in comparison to students of school leaving age. Indeed, several mature students enrolled on the course with qualifications which considerably exceeded the minimum entry requirements.

(2) According to HEMIS Student Records which was the data base used by Riverdale College for recording admissions and enrolment details, the number of mature students applying for places on the B.Ed course had slowly risen from approximately 20% in 1980 to almosst 40% in 1989.

(3) At the time of study, individual Schools within Riverdale College did not have their own research budgets. The research budget was administered centrally by the College Research Committee. For some years, the CRC had operated a policy for research funding which excluded bids for research leading to the award of Ph.D. Funding for higher degrees could only be granted from individual Schools who were able to allocate monies from a budget heading, entitled,'Staff Development' at the discretion of the Head of School. During the time in which I was applying for research funding, the School of Education SDB was under considerable pressure to fund tutors to update their primary school experience in accordance with CATE (Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education) criteria. Education tutors could spend as much as an entire term in a primary school engaged in this exercise. Requests for research funding were therefore seldom successful. However, the School of Education

did agree to pay my course fees and travel expenses and I eventually succeeded in a bid to the College Research Committee for remission from teaching for three hours a week for one year in order to collect the data.

The attitude to research changed radically when Riverdale College decided to apply for university status, for which key criteria were a successful track record of research publications, research studentships and research degrees. As a consequence, a larger share of the college budget was allocated for research activities and research received a much higher institutional-profile which led, eventually, to the establishment of its own Research Centre and the appointment of Readers and Professorships.

(4) This comment needs to be set in the context of institutional change as a result of funding policy for higher education. During the year 1991-92, the Polytechnic and College Funding Corporation financially rewarded institutions who recruited beyond their Student Target Numbers. As part of a strategy for gaining university status, Riverdale College embarked upon some ambitious expansion schemes which involved several major building projects and a substantial staffing increase. By significantly over-recruiting on all its taught programmes, the college was able to substantially increase its fee income. As a result, it was successful in securing a sizable capital grant allocation for refurbishment and new buildings.

A consequence of this strategy was a three-year period of congestion and upheaval in teaching rooms, the library and car-parks. Teaching rooms designed for 20 students now had to accommodate as many as 30 students. The B.Ed intake for the next two years, doubled with inadequate compensatory increases in staffing and resources. The effects on education tutors were unwelcome and stressful. Not only was their teaching and marking load substantially increased but they also frequently found themselves teaching sessions on a 'back-to-back' basis, which meant that as one two-hour teaching session finished, another one began. Unless tutors were creative and resourceful in their use of time, this could mean teaching in a crowded and stuffy room for four hours at a stretch. The mature students were sensitive to these effects on tutors and only went to see them outside teaching times when it concerned a problem they could not solve without their help. However, they were often frustrated by the fact that tutors could not answer their queries at the end of sessions because they had to leave directly to teach another group. Students generally, found tutors unsympathetic to ad hoc requests for tutorials as a result of increased pressure of work. Some of the women in the research group were conscious of the dilemma that this posed for tutors who valued good staff/student relationships and I was often told by them that they did not wish to add to the burdens of their hard-pressed tutors. The women, thus seldom went to see them, even when they would have preferred to have done otherwise. The opportunity to talk to me for an uninterrupted hour or more, was therefore perceived by the women as a rare and welcome opportunity to have individual tutor contact.

(5) I kept a research journal throughout the entire research process. This included entries about the women's conversations with me in several contexts outside the interviews both during and after the year of data collection. I also kept a written recording of all Ph.D tutorials with my supervisor to which reflections and details of proposed action were added afterwards. In addition, I compiled in date order, all the correspondence which was exchanged between myself, my supervisor and the women students. Reading this some years later, was like

having a conversation with myself which helped to clarify and make transparent the process of thinking and refinement about the evolving theoretical framework. Mostly because of mounting pressure of work at Riverdale College and a feeling that research time was running out, I did not, to my intense regret, systematically record in the diary, the various processes the data underwent in generating a theoretical analysis - hence the need for a good memory! Fortunately, I kept all the draft plans, rough notes of categories and their subsequent grouping into emergent concepts which made it possible for me to recall, with reasonable accuracy, the approximate order in which the various stages of the analysis occurred.

CHAPTER 3

THE DECISION TO TEACH: A LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE

The issue of why a group of women aged between twenty-four and forty-five decided to take up teaching when they did was of sociological interest for two main reasons: firstly the turbulant and rapidly changing educational and social context in which they were embarking upon a career in teaching and secondly, the biographical context from which the decision arose.

When I began the field work for this study the teaching profession was the focus of considerable media attention with regard to educational standards, professional status and teacher morale. Since the Conservative Government first came to power in 1979, a steady stream of radical educational change had been forced upon teachers in a seemingly unremitting tide of paper work and bureaucracy. In 1991, when I was conducting the first set of interviews, the changes to the curriculum, its assessment and financial management of schools showed little sign of abatement. At the same time a debate about reading standards in the primary school had caused public concern as well as fuelling the Government's critical stance towards the teaching profession (cf Turner, 1990). For several years, the teaching

profession had been at the receiving end of a prolonged and hostile series of exchanges with the Government. Eventually, the sheer speed and scale of educational reform, combined with a relentless and politically motivated scrutiny of primary education's practice and performance (cf Alexander, 1992; Alexander, Rose & Woodhead, 1992), led to a concern about teacher morale and speculations about a significant exodus from the profession. Given that most of the women in the research group worked in local schools in a paid or voluntary capacity, it was likely that they had participated in or overheard teachers discussing some of these issues. Their position as parent helpers in schools would thus give them both a teacher's and a parent's perspective of the prevailing mood within education and the profession as a whole. I wanted to know how far these issues had entered into their decision to take up teaching in the 1990s. Secondly, the question, 'What were the factors which led to your decision to apply for a course of teacher training?', frequently led to a life history account of the part which their schooling, childhood, work experience, the role of motherhood, work in schools and perceived changes within themselves, had played in their decision to take up teaching as a career. An initial reading of the data on the women's responses to this question revealed that in no case was this decision unidimensional. On the contrary, it was multifaceted and the outcome of a complex interplay of

biographical, historical, family and social elements. I therefore needed a conceptual framework which would shed light on the dynamic relationship between history, life events, subjective experience and the social actions of individuals. In order to understand the reasons which lay behind the women's decision it was necessary to view the events which led to it within the context of their lives as a whole.

A similar point is made by Ball and Goodson (1985) in relation to their work on teachers' careers. Dissatisfied with studies of schooling which had focused on situation and occasion, Goodson (1983) argued that insufficient attention has been given to the individual biography, personal views and life-style of the teacher (p.139). If teachers developed strategies in order to cope and survive within the classroom, then it was also important to understand both the personal and situational context in which these strategies came to be adopted. Goodson argued that a more balanced and realistic model of human action would be gained if sociological studies included 'an integration of biographical, historical and situational analyses' (Goodson, 1983, p.142). The incorporation of the life history method and its conceptual 'offshoots', the life cycle and the life course, have thus been taken up in a sociological enterprise to understand the lives and careers of teachers. (Ball and Goodson, 1985; Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985). Beyond education, life history methods in sociology were also beginning to

surface in Europe following a decline in the 1940s after the successful wave of life history accounts from Poland and Chicago (cf Thomas & Znaniecki, 1927; Shaw, 1930; Cornwall & Sutherland, 1937). Bertaux (1981), for example, eschewing positivism as a limited conceptual framework for producing sociological knowledge, had come to believe that the life history approach gave direct access to social relations which he considered to be the core of sociological knowledge. Life 'stories', as he preferred to call them, provided the link between the individual and sociohistorical change. He wanted life stories to be written in accessible narratives which would 'find their way into living cultures.....and become common knowledge' (1981, p.44).

> We should tell stories; not only the life stories of various people, but also the story of such or such a pattern of social relations, the story of a culture, of an institution, of a social group; and also, our *own* story as research workers.
>
> (Bertaux, 1981, p.44).

In the last fifteen years there has been a discernible revival and growth of interest among sociologists in the use of life histories. In addition to the studies of teaching already mentioned above, notable contributors have included, (Elder, 1978; Hareven, 1978; Plummer, 1983; Allatt, 1987; Bryman, 1987), inter alia. In the work of these writers I found a theoretical approach which gave prominence to the individual's experience as it changed over time. Within this framework, the concept of time could be utilised as way of explaining

the individual's relationship to social change. One development of the life history method has been the emergence of the concept of 'life course' analysis which was introduced by Hareven (1978) and Elder (1978).

The Life Course Perspective

A discussion of the distinction between the closely related concepts of 'life course' and life history' has already been outlined in Chapter 1 and both concepts are used throughout the study in the context of this distinction. Of key significance to the case study is the view that the life course develops within a historical context. In this perspective, socialization and ageing are considered to be 'lifelong phenomena' (Elder, 1981, p.78) and not simply a 'stage' in a life cycle process. The implication of this notion is that socialization continues throughout adult life rather than being limited to the early years of childhood. Drawing upon his work on family histories, Elder recognised that:

> patterns of family experience and behaviour are also influenced by the interaction of macro-level social and economic conditions, biological and culturally determined, age-related factors and by individual 'career-histories', such as in the employment sphere. These factors are incorporated into what has become known as life course analysis.
>
> (Elder, 1978, pp.21-2).

Central to life course formulations is the concept of 'transition'. A

transition occurs when, for example, a woman gets married, becomes a mother, starts a career and when her children start or leave school. Morgan (1985) argued that the key-word 'transition' has much more 'dynamic and purposive connotations than the earlier 'stage of family life cycle.' (p.178). Writing about a group of women who had recently undergone the major transition of becoming a mother for the first time, Brannen argued that:

> though transitions 'happen' to individuals, individuals also construct them. At the same time they are shaped and influenced by wider historical, ideological and structural forces.
>
> (1987, p.165).

Asking the women in my study why they had decided to take up teaching at this particular point in their lives and the factors which had led to it, prompted a casting back and forth in their life's history to find a response to my question. What they recounted was the result of tracking through their lives to find points of transition which related to their decision to teach. These transitions included significant experiences in their schooling, childhood, marriage, work experience, motherhood and the process of bringing up their children. Their relationships with their husbands, partners and children also formed an important part of their decision to take up teaching as did particular phases of their children's development and schooling. Acknowledging the importance of life history data in recognising the overlap in the

chronology between individuals' lives and social institutions, Dex (1991) commented that:

> It may seem obvious that husband's and wives, for example, influence each other's decisions, but until recently this was rarely studied, particularly in relation to shared past experiences and decisions.
>
> (1991, p.2).

Their particular cultural perspective on the role of motherhood also figured significantly in their responses. As Yeandle noted in her study of married women at midlife,

> Any study of how individual's experience life events or stages in the life course must be located in the context of those individual, family and historical experiences which have shaped their previous lives.
>
> (Yeandle, 1987, p.117).

I was studying an aspect of the women's experience at a particular stage in their life course. I was also investigating the timing of their decision in terms of how it affected them as individuals and their families. In addition, I wanted to know more about the events in their past lives which had prevented them from teaching earlier or made them defer their decision to teach until this particular point in time, now. The relationship between time and age in the women with the age and temporal concerns of their families, was clearly an important consideration in understanding their responses to my question. In relation to this point, Hareven (1982) made a useful distinction between

individual time, family time and historical time. Individual time refers to the age and state of health when a given event occurred; family time refers to the cycle of family life s/he has reached and historical time indicates what economic, social and political conditions prevailed in the world beyond him/her. The life course perspective thus seemed an appropriate and useful theoretical framework within which to analyse and explain why the women in my study decided to take up teaching when they did. The categories which arose from the data also appeared to fit well with the vocabulary and concepts of the life course including for example, childhood, motherhood, family, time, age, transition, turning-points and change.

The following extract from my interview with Linda Vince, reveals several of these categories at an early point in the interview:

DD What were the factors which led up to your decision to train for teaching?

LV Partly the push from the headmaster that I'd got it in me to do it. A little girl's dream. I wanted to be a missionary in India who taught maths. I want an occupation that's going to leave me spending the rest of my life with children now mine have grown up and I wanted children to fill the gap when mine leave home. When my youngest went to infant school I just felt as if somebody had cut off my arms and legs. All of a sudden I was there on my own. They grew away from me. They didn't need me as much as I needed them and I found it very difficult and I thought this isn't going to happen again because I found through doing my voluntary work in schools, I filled the gaps and then I could still be Mum as they wanted me whenever they were home.

DD Why didn't you take up teacher training before?

LV I'm very much a mother first and I feel that whether right or wrong my place is to always be here for my children. I felt they were very, very important years especially up to when they started school. As the oldest one moved on I just followed through the schools that they attended, thoroughly enjoying what I was doing, was very much involved in the schools in lots of different areas and didn't realise that my voluntary work was literally taking over my life. I wanted both the children to be in secondary schools before I left home to do anything else.

DD So you now feel that the children are at an age when you can leave them?

LV Definitely, because we've had like a two-year trial period where I've actually been going out every day and sometimes I've had to go in the holidays when they're at home. Gradually we've given the oldest one a bit more responsibility. He's coming up fourteen now and I can trust him completely but I still get the little one looked after. I still feel that he needs a home base. I've been out five days a week this year and it will be four days a week for the coming year. I've done an A' level course with the 16 year olds at a local school.

Linda's response serves to illustrate the point I made earlier about the women tracking through their lives in order to pinpoint the key transitions and turning points which were the precursers to the decision to take up teaching. She refers firstly to her own schooling where her headmaster confirmed his belief in her ability to teach which is then related back in her past to a 'childhood dream' in which she aspired to become a teaching missionary. She then talks about the transition she experienced when her children went to school; a painful period of loss and detachment which she resolved by undertaking voluntary work as a parent helper in her children's school. She emphasizes her

commitment to the role of motherhood believing that she could not act upon her wish to teach until the children were at secondary school. This is the point in time when she felt she could relinquish some of the responsibilities of motherhood, when in her view, the children were relatively independent and capable of being trusted on their own. In no sense has her decision to teach been made independently or in isolation from the family. It is inextricably bound up with their needs in the context of her ideological commitment to the role of the 'good mother' (cf Steedman, 1988; Grumet, 1988). Hareven (1982) noted a similar pattern in her study of a New England community with regard to the making of decisions:

> 'Decisions were not made exclusively on the basis of individual preferences; they depended rather on the choices and needs of the family as a collective unit, and on available institutional support.'
>
> (p.167).

Linda's commitment to a 'caring career' (Yeandle, 1987, p.124) meant that she 'filled the gaps' by taking up voluntary work as a parent helper in her children's school. There would appear to be a strong connection here between her voluntary work and motherhood. Indeed, analysis of the data suggests a close continuity between motherhood and paid and unapaid work in school, a point which will be developed later on in the chapter. Over time, she gradually increased this voluntary work to five days a week as well as undertaking an A' level course as part of her

preparation to gain the necessary entry qualifications for a B.Ed Course of teacher training. She perceived her study and her voluntary work in schools as a 'trial period' which gave both herself and her family a chance to see whether her commitments outside the home could be successfully integrated into her family life. Given the priority she attached to her responsibilities as a mother, she needed to minimise potential dislocation and discontinuity in her family life. She therefore carefully planned and orchestrated the changes in her life in an incremental, step-at-a-time (Evetts, 1987) approach from which she did not move forward until she was confident that her family was adjusting and adapting to the changes she was making to the family routine. Linda proceeded cautiously and calculatingly, only acting on the basis of lived experience and her value orientations as a mother. A strength of the life course perspective in understanding changes in life events is that it 'sees the interrelationship between individual and collective family behaviour as they constantly change over people's lives and in the context of historical conditions.' (Hareven, 1982, p.6). Linda is constructing her own transition but it is shaped and influenced by the needs of her family which is, in turn, patterned by structural forces which determine society's expectations of motherhood.

As her children become more independent, Linda's life changes from a day-to-day preoccupation with motherhood to one in which she

can forsee a greater degree of time and space for her own potential development. Slowly and inexorably, she moves closer to the realisation of her childhood dream to become a teacher. The transition she is experiencing, simultaneously affects her family as familiar routines and patterns of family life alter. As Elder (1987) observed in her study of women returning to employment after childbirth, 'transitions seldom occur singly and they can be both concurrent and overlapping' (cited in Brannen, 1987, p.165). In the following transcript, Linda Vince describes the effects of the transition she was experiencing, on her family:

DD So both you and the family have had a taster of what life will be like when you become a full-time student?

LV Yes and I think it's done us all good. It's made the children realise that Mum's got this to do and that to do, and it's made them help out a little bit, not a lot, but they do a little. It's helped the oldest one a lot because he sees Mum doing home-work while he's sitting doing his. There's been a lot of discussion about who's doing what. The A' level study has brought me up to date and I can now help my children which to me is wonderful.

At this point of Linda's transitional pathway, both she and the family have gained. The children have learned that their mother has needs and wishes; they have begun to help out in the house, albeit in a limited capacity, and her study at night has provided a positve study role model for the older child to emulate. Continuous with her caring career, the

new knowledge gained during the A' level study has enabled her to help with her children's homework. What was striking about many of the women's responses to my initial question about why they had decided to take up teaching, was the extent to which any improvement, skill, pleasure, interest or insight gained as a result of further study and work with children, was almost always offered up and shared for family consumption. There was little sign of the single-minded, self-interested, careerist behaviour often associated with highly motivated individuals intent on achieving a long cherished ambition (cf Nias, 1989).

Later on in the interview, Linda told me how she felt when she had taken her A' level examination. This was a turning-point in her life and would, if she passed, take her a step nearer her short-term goal of entering a course of teacher training. I asked her if she could articulate the point in the transition she now felt she had reached and how it affected both her and the family:

LV I had so many emotions when I'd finished the exams yesterday. I told my husband that I was relieved it's over and I'm excited that it's the first step of the ladder to the dream. I'm sad to leave the Tertiary college. I have made tremendous friends and especially my psychology lecturer. I've had to deal with so many different things all at once. Suddenly being an independent woman and not the little woman at the sink anymore.

DD How have you found these transitions and changes in your life?

LV They've been very nerve racking and I've made a mistake that I've advised other mature students that come to the college, not to do. When I started I tried to be the perfect mother, the perfect wife, the perfect student - and you can't do it.

DD So what changes did you make?

LV I still kept everything as a student but I tried to reorganise slightly so that I had a little bit of space at home. So I delegated here (at home). We were very much a family where I was the homemaker and Tom was the provider. I did the garden and Tom did the allotment. And we had a team talk and the children did their bedrooms and Tom would hoover through for me if he was on shift at home. We just worked together. We'd all had very independent roles until then and everything to do with home was mine and I just found I couldn't cope. I think I also stopped expecting myself to be super woman because I went in with the attitude that my husband's and my children's lives were not going to be affected by something I wanted to do. Their lives have been affected but I think they've gained from it.

I have quoted from this transcript at length because it shows the way in which transitions and turning points overlap between the individual and the family. They are partly shaped and controlled by Linda and partly by institutional and structural factors. In Linda's reflexive account of this particular turning-point in her life she focuses on the precise aspects of change as they affect her and the family. She discusses her own changing role from 'the little woman at the sink' to independent woman. This change brings with it a substantial increase in her burden of responsibility as she attempts to take on a student role with no commensurate decrease in her former share of domestic labour as wife and mother. The cumulative affect of trying to play out all the roles to her own former standards of expectation becomes too demanding and

with it, the realisation that both she and her family must change. The gender-differentiated division of labour which had always existed in her family now had to become less rigidly defined in the form of a negotiated agreement with her husband and children that they begin to take on some of the household chores formally regarded as her domain. Given the unequal distribution of labour with regard to childcare, motherhood and housework which still exists in our society (cf Deem, 1980; MacDonald, 1980; Acker, 1984; Edwards, 1993), it was hardly surprising that Linda embarked upon her quest to become a teacher believing that her own aspirations should not affect her children or her husband. According to the research literature on women's relationship to paid work and domestic responsibility, Linda's experience is typical of many women who take up work, paid or unpaid, outside the home. The extra work they take on 'is in addition to, rather than instead of, unpaid domestic and caring work within the family' (Wimbush, 1987, p.152). (See also Spencer, 1986; Brannen, 1987; Graham, 1984; Morgan, 1985; Bird & West, 1987; Finch, 1983 & 1987). Spencer (1986) made a similar point in her study on women teachers in America. She found that her teachers had a 'triple day' of work. 'They taught all day, did most of the housework (including child care), and then did more school work, such as grading papers' (p.89).

Part of the transition which Linda underwent before she began her

teacher training course included the realisation that her family were and would continue to be affected by her decision to teach. In her early preparations for this event they too were experiencing change and transition in their own lives and routines, and according to Linda, it was for the better. The interview extracts show how closely biography, family, structure and history were interwoven in Linda's decision to teach.

Besides the life course categories of childhood, motherhood, work experience and child care, two further factors featured prominently in the data in relation to the women's decision to teach: the role of significant others and a strong relationship between schooling and gender, a theme already introduced in the first chapter. In order to gain a broader picture of how these categories help to illuminate and explain the multilayered complexity of the women's decision to teach in relation to a life course perspective, each one will be be examined and discussed in turn, broadly in the order in which they occurred in the women's lives:

Schooling and Gender

A key area of sociological interest in this first set of interviews was the issue of why some women had felt able to take up teaching in their mid-twenties and early thirties whilst others had delayed their decision until they were in their mid-forties. The question which was

posed was, "Why now?" As might be expected, the women's responses varied according to individual experience and an initial reading of the data on their experience of secondary schooling, indicated a broad pattern of missed or thwarted opportunity, lack of encouragement from both teachers and parents and negligible careers advice. However, the women gave some very specific reasons for leaving school at sixteen, before taking the necessary A' level examinations in order to gain entry into higher education. The most frequently cited reason related to economic factors. Many women reported that they had to leave because their parents could no longer afford to keep them at school and needed their financial contribution to the household budget. This was especially the case where there had been marital breakdown, divorce or the death of a parent. Some admitted that they did not like school and were attracted by the prospect of getting a job and earning a wage. A few were discouraged from teaching by teachers who perceived teaching, particularly primary teaching, as a low status occupation (cf Burgess, H.,1989). Others left because they became disillusioned with school as a result of changes to the school's organisation and policy through the processes of amalgamation and comprehensivation. One or two left to get married or because they did not believe they had the academic ability to become teachers. Lack of confidence in their own ability pervaded the

women's responses throughout the interview and indeed, throughout the first year of the teacher training course, a point which will be taken up in a later chapter. This self doubt was often fuelled by low expectations of their ability on the part of both teachers and parents. This was certainly Barbara Melling's experience:

DD Were you encouraged at school? Did you ever talk to a teacher about becoming a teacher yourself?

BM I remember once, and I said, I think I would like to be teaching and the teacher said, "I don't think you'll manage it." And that was enough then to think I won't manage it because she's said I won't manage it. And as a young child you do believe unless you really want it hard enough and then I think I just perhaps rebelled and thought well, I'm not going to make it anyway. And the attitude seemed to be.....I mean, as I say, my family, for instance, there's four girls, one boy. My brother was pushed that much more and I think it was very much .....well, its not so important for girls because they're going to get married and have families anyway, and that seemed to be the attitude. I certainly don't feel I was encouraged and I still say to this day, and I did say to my Mum actually, "It goes to show when you get older and you still want that", I said, "I should have done this years ago and had I had the determination I've got now, I would have succeeded."

This extract gives a personal account of how low teacher expectation and the effects of gender socialisation acted to discourage Barbara from persisting with her wish to teach whilst at the same time providing a rationale for her to leave school. The opportunities available to her were unevenly distributed in her brother's favour. Her brother was 'pushed' and she was not. There is now a wealth of sociological

literature on the patterns and processes of gender socialisation and differentiation in schooling which examines the disadvantages experienced by females both in educational and employment opportunities, (see, for example, Acker & Warren-Piper, 1984; Acker, 1989; Byrne, 1978; David, 1989; Deem, 1980; Delamont, 1980, 1989; Gaskell, 1992).

Financial constraints frequently prevented the women from staying on at school, especially when another sibling, usually a brother, was being supported through higher education. Karen James's parents could not afford to buy a home as well as see two children through school and into higher education and Karen's educational needs were perceived as less important than her brother's:

DD How far back in your life have you been interested in teaching? If you went back to your school days, did you want to take up a career then?

KJ Yes, I did, yes. ....Because I'd got a younger brother - I don't know if this is true, but at the time he was very bright and they wanted him to go to a Grammar school and the places for grammar schools in Sussex were apparently harder to get than they were up here at the time and so they decided for his benefit to move up here, but it meant that I had to leave school which I didn't really want to do but I don't think I had enough O' levels anyway at the time to get me further....So it was put to me that I should leave school and get a job because they needed the money because they'd bought their first house which before, we were in a council house. So....I suppose perhaps, I should have been a bit tougher and said, "No. I don't want to leave. I want to go and do something else." But I wasn't so I just went out to work and drifted about and got married and had children and didn't think any more about it until afterwards really.

There were many accounts like these where the women had wanted to stay on at school or who were encouraged by teachers to take A' levels but were prevented from doing so because of family financial difficulties. Much of the women's experience of schooling bears out the depressing effects which gender socialisation and economic factors can have on women's educational opportunities and which are documented in many of the studies on women and education referred to above (see also Purvis,1981; Gaskell, 1992).

Several of the women were in their early to late thirties at the time of interview so the period of time in which they are recounting their experience of schooling was during the 1970s. Their comments about the loss of educational opportunity at this time indicate a sharp awareness of society's subordination of women into domestic roles which at the time, they felt powerless to overcome. During this period, jobs were in plentiful supply, particularly in clerical work and in the service industries. It was therefore relatively easy to get a job in either of these categories of occupation. Even when the women had been reluctant to leave school, several of them succeeded in getting jobs which gave them a measure of fulfilment and satisfaction. Indeed, many of them commented that they had enjoyed the experience of being independent and earning money. Not all the women left school against their will. Some admitted to being desperate to leave and had no wish

to stay on to take further examinations. Others became disillusioned when their grammar schools were amalgamated with other schools to form comprehensive schools. The 1960s and 1970s, the period during which most of the mature women would have been at secondary school, was a time of change and reorganisation in secondary education when many grammar schools and former secondary modern schools were amalgamated to form 'all-ability' or comprehensive schools. Apart from the case studies carried out by Burgess (1983) and Ball (1981) on comprehensive schools, the problems experienced by pupils and teachers as a result of secondary reorganisation, is an underresearched area. The women had, in some cases, been separated from the teachers with whom they had built a relationship and moved to classes with new teachers with the consequence that they lost continuity and enthusiasm for school. One or two left school because they had met their present husbands and felt that they no longer 'needed' education. A small minority believed that they had received every opportunity and encouragement to do well but had not worked hard enough, were beguiled by the prospect of getting a job and earning a living and left school with negligible educational qualifications.

The wish to teach is thus temporarily suspended. Whilst many women regretted leaving school when they did, there were few signs of bitterness or rancour. They, for the most part, accepted that for the

time being, there was little they could do about it and so set about the search for a suitable job, often succeeding in finding one in the same week and sometimes, even on the same day, that they left school.

The deterministic theories of social and cultural reproduction discussed in Chapter 1 would appear to have some relevance to the women at this point in their lives. For the time being at least, educational and career opportunities had been limited or closed off to them as a result of unequal gender divisions of labour which had been 'successfully' reproduced by their schools, families, culture and social class (cf MacDonald, 1980; Acker, 1984).

How far is gender inequality reproduced in the women's domestic division of labour (Acker, 1984; Pascall & Cox, 1993b) when they get married and subsequently become mothers and what is its relationship with the paid and unpaid work they take up outside the home?

Work Experience, Motherhood and the Family

I have used the term 'work experience' in order to embrace a wider concept of work than that normally associated with the contractual obligations of paid work. Because the women had experienced a range of work both paid and unpaid, voluntary and contractual, within a time span which traversed the period before and after motherhood, I needed a term under which all kinds of categories of 'work' could be examined in relation to their decision to teach.

Once the women had become mothers, their ability to take on the same kinds of work they had undertaken before childbirth was fundamentally altered because of childcare responsibilities. The kind of work they could now consider was circumscribed by the role of motherhood which in itelf had often altered and changed them as individuals. Wimbush noted in her study of the leisure and health experiences among mothers with young children, that:

> becoming a mother is a point in a women's life cycle which marks major transitions. As well as adjusting to a general change in lifestyle, becoming a parent, for women, also often means adjusting to changes in employment opportunities, social status and identity, workload and social networks.
>
> (1987, p.149).

It is also a point in a woman's life where gender inequalities can become more sharply experienced as their lives become centred on the needs of their family. The consequences of lack of personal time to devote to their own needs and the loss of fulfilling work outside the home can have a detrimental effect on their physical and psychological well being (cf Wimbush, 1987, 9.160; Yeandle, 1984, p.72; Dex, 1984, p.39). In my study, the women's experience of motherhood had certainly altered their perceptions about the kind of work they now considered satisfying and rewarding. The experience of motherhood is also inextricably bound up with their later perceptions of what counts as satisfying and fulfiling work. The kinds of work taken on by the women on leaving

school broadly conformed to the kinds of jobs frequently allocated to women in the labour market, (cf Deem, 1980; Dex 1984, 1991; Oakley, 1982; Bell & Roberts, 1984; Roberts, 1981) and included nursing, paid child care, banking, sales, catering and clerical work. The paucity of careers advice and prevailing cultural attitudes to women and employment frequently meant that the women drifted into jobs which gave them little satisfaction or prospects for more interesting and challenging work. Carole Payne, for example, began with a job in banking:

DD Did you get any careers advice?

CP Oh I had the careers interview, I remember. I think because at the end of the day when I looked into a job and I got the job in a bank, everbody thought, oh that's a really good job. That's good. And then they switched off. Instead of trying to dissuade me and telling me to think about staying on....No. There was no influence there at all. I mean my parents were very supportive and encouraging but they didn't ever get involved in school issues at all. They believed what they were told and again, to them, a bank job was very good for a girl - a lovely, nice job. And I did enjoy it for a certain amount of time.

Carole's experience was fairly typical of many of the women in the study. Faced with insufficient educational qualifications to train for the job they really wanted to do and the lack of any real direction in their lives, they went from one job to another in the forlorn hope that they might eventually find work which they found rewarding. The sense of

drift and disappointment is very apparent in the following extract from the interview with Ruth Barker:

> RB I would honestly say that at 16 years I left school very immature. Rather than choosing what I did, it just happened. I went into lab. work which I didn't like. I found it very restricting and very boring. So I looked for change and something I didn't need to get qualified for, was sales and I gravitated into sales and I just thrived on it. But I think in hindsight, I drifted. I was channelled into something I didn't want to do.

Not all the women had experiences of this kind. Some found work which offered them challenge and satisfaction along with good pay and promotional prospects which they did not give up until the birth of their first child. The relationship between this work and their wish to teach would therefore appear to be tenuous and tangential: what was much more significant was the experience of motherhood. In the interviews the women spoke enthusiastically about their engagement with their own children's development. Watching and helping their offspring learn to walk, speak their first words and eventually read and write their own name, for example, fed the mothers' interest in their children's intellectual development. The women frequently spoke of wishing that they possessed a greater knowledge and understanding of children's learning so that they could have helped their children more. It was this interest, along with their children's entry into school, which re-kindled their wish to teach and which led them into voluntary work in schools.

Contrary to many of the studies carred out on the relationship between women, health, motherhood and employment (cf Wimbush, 1987; Brannen, 1987; Morgan, 1985; Bird and West, 1987), the women in my study talked about motherhood as a positive and confidence enhancing experience. This view of motherhood as a highly valued role was also noted by Grant (1989) in her study of women teachers' career pathways, and in Pascall and Cox's (1993b) investigation of women returners to higher education. However, the relationship of motherhood with a primary school pedagogy which rests on the notion of the 'mother made conscious' needs to be viewed critically in terms of its association with 'triviality' and 'anti-intellectualism' (Steedman, 1988, p.22). There are serious gender issues here which have implications for the status of primary school teaching and what counts as a suitable career for women which, as Burgess, H. and Carter, (1992) have rightly pointed out, are seldom challenged or questioned in teacher training courses (p.352). Motherhood and its associated cultural connotations is thus, a problematic and contradictory notion with regard to primary teaching. However, from the women's perspective, motherhood remained a significant turning point in their lives and was the most frequently cited event in their adult life course which accounted for the re-energizing of their wish to teach.

The next turning point occurred at various junctures of their

children's entry into the school system: for some women this was reached when their first child went to a pre-school playgroup; for others, it was not until at least one of their children had begun secondary schooling. As dependency upon them decreased the women felt the need to be out of the house in search of experiences which took them beyond the confines of domesticity a point also noted by Pascall & Cox (1993a) in their study of mature women students. Many of the women reported that being a mother had changed them as people, part of which involved an assessment of their current and future lives.

The experience of motherhood appeared to unite several factors which, in turn, reasserted the wish to teach. The growth of confidence, maturity, interest in their children's learning and the voluntary work in schools were key factors in spurring the women on to take action and move forward in the direction of teacher training. Beryl King offered a succinct summary of what many of the women told me as they outlined the factors which had led up to their decision to teach:

BK It wasn't until I started helping at the school that I really decided that this is what I wanted to do and I wished now that I could have done it in the first place.....It definitely made a difference when I helped at the school and I felt very sort of at home with the children. Different to when I was at work, really. I felt more comfortable doing that sort of thing and I suppose with my own children as well - it was a funny feeling - they wanted help but I didn't know all the time how is the best way to give it to them and wanted to know more about it. I'm interested in how they learn and the best

> way to show them things and it amazes me the things they pick up in those first few years. I find it quite exciting the way they learn things and its definitely made me more interested with having my own children as well.

The experience of taking on work as parent helpers in school provided two essential opportunities: it gave the women an enjoyable and rewarding experience which was continuous with the interest they had taken in their own children's learning and it gave them a live 'rehearsal' for what it felt like to be a teacher. Whilst the women do not have the formal responsibilities of a teacher, their regular presence in a classroom working with large numbers of children, gave them a taste of what it felt like to be a teacher. Apart from schemes involving work experience and work shadowing, teaching is probably one of the few professions which so freely allows for the possibility of working voluntarily as a helper or of gaining teaching experience as a prelude to formal training. So successful were some of the women in their voluntary work that they were offered paid employment in schools as classroom assistants, welfare helpers or work with children who had special needs. The more they were involved in the life of the school, the more the wish to teach strengthened. Becoming a parent helper, running a playgroup, working in a similar capacity with children's uniformed organisations like cubs or brownies, or with ex-curricula activities such as dancing, drama or sport, for example, were significant experiences which often led to a decision to take their wish to teach

further. Beth Wells describes her perception of the relationship between teaching, motherhood and voluntary work in schools.

DD And would you say that your role as a parent has a part to play in your wish to teach?

BW Yes, definitely. As a parent I feel I've always been a teacher and my children are doing very well at school and even with other people's children, it comes naturally to me.
I sort sit of down with them and play with them and read to them. It comes naturally with me that when I'm with children I sort of take over the teaching role. I can't explain it.....but really its since having my own children and since getting so much as a parent helper. I felt I wanted to be more than to be a parent helper. I thought I would like the challenge of having a class of my own and I just feel that I've got a lot to give and I felt being a parent helper was very rewarding but I felt I could do more.

Bird and West (1987) in their study of women returners, make the point that the skills and competencies gained by women through their roles as mothers, wives and volunteer helpers often do not count in the labour market. However, teaching may be one of the few professions where these skills *are* valued and perceived as relevant. This may be to the women's distinct advantage at this point in their quest to teach, but the other side of the same 'coin' may later prove to be a disavantage in their teaching careers. Burgess, H. (1989), for example, cautions women teachers against perceiving their class of primary school children as, 'my class' or, 'my children', arguing that a strongly held allegiance to the notion of 'mother in the classroom', may 'unknowingly

support the career trap which prevents many very able women teachers from applying for promotion....,' (1989, p.86).

The interrelationship between the women's education, work and the experience of motherhood has been discussed in the context of its significance to the decision to teach. The data revealed that the act of deciding to teach was rarely the straightforward outcome of a posteriori reasoning or a linear chain of events. Rather, it appeared to be the consequence of a series of connected networks of relationships which intersected with private, public and historical spheres of life experience. Brannen (1987) observed that:

> the life course of women comprises several careers, including production (paid and unpaid work and caring), consumption and reproduction. These careers not only interact one with another, they also intersect with the careers of other people, especially partners in the household.
>
> (p.168).

What part then do the lives of others both within and outside the family play in influencing the women's decision to teach and how do these factors link up with the subjective experiences of time, transition and change?

Time: Transitions and Turning Points

The point in their lives at which the women decide they can take up teaching appears to be the consequence of a number of factors which come together in such a way that they feel confident and secure about commiting themselves to a firm decision. Their certainty about the

timing of this decision was often expressed in the following ways: 'the time is right,' 'now is the time', 'this is the right time for me', 'if I don't do it now, it will be too late,' 'I'm ready for a change.' The category of 'time' proved to be a rich concept, the examination of which led to a deeper understanding of the processes of decision making and the factors which shaped and formed it. At a particular point during the years of child rearing and managing the family, the women feel 'they want something more' from life. There are many instances in the data where the reader gets a sense of the women taking stock of their lives in a search which assesses the future and its potential based on past and present life events. They reflect back on their past employment experiences in the context of their roles as mothers and wives. These life experiences have changed them and what they did before is no longer desirable or acceptable. The interplay of history, familial career, work experience and subjective experience now fuse together to form a stronger and more secure base from which to act. The way in which these experiences interconnect in relation to the decision to teach is clearly articulated by Pauline Cash:

DD How far do you feel that your experience in paid employment, your voluntary work as a mother helper and life experience as a mother relates to your wish to teach?

PC ..I suppose everything in way. Everything relates to..... What I've done before, I know I don't want to do again. I mean that's the negative view of it but I want to do more and I feel that I'm capable of doing more.

DD So why take up teaching now?

PC Well I never felt that I wanted to go out to work while the children were young. I've always enjoyed being at home with them. I think once the first one started school, then it made me realise that I'm not going to be happy at home. I'm happy while they're there but I'm not going to be happy at home while they're not. I knew I'd got to do something. I knew I couldn't stand office work for very long. I also knew I wanted to learn more as well and improve my academic qualifications and it gradually came to me that this sort of dream of primary school teaching....that you know....I don't know why I couldn't do it. Why not?

The importance of time in a life course perspective in understanding both cultural and historical definitions of time as well as the alignment between individual and family time is emphasised by Hareven (1978a) and Finch (1987). Hareven makes the point that in the past there was a more pressing need to synchronise family timetables than is the case now:

> because the economic well-being of the family and survival of family members depended on the family group being able to deliver effective mutual assistance. Only in the relatively recent past and when certain economic and welfare functions have been taken outside the family, has the timing of transitions taken on a more voluntary and individual character.
>
> (Hareven, 1978a, cited in Finch, 1987, p.164).

I made the point earlier that whilst the women constructed their own transitions, this was done in the context of historical and family life events. A similar set of constraints applied to the degree of control which the women had over *when* they would act upon a decision which

would bring about change. Cultural and normative perspectives about when a women should leave her children to go out to work, or in this case, become a full-time student teacher, continued to exert an influence upon the timing of the women's decision to train for teaching. However, the precise moment in time when they felt able to do so, varied according to individual circumstances and perceptions of when the time was 'right'. The 'right time' is therefore an individual construction which is patterned by historical and family events. In the following extract the interplay of the categories of time and transition can be seen in relation to Beth Wells's decision to teach. Her children were aged ten and seven years and this is the point at which she believes they are sufficiently independent for her to be able to consider becoming a full-time student teacher:

BW That's interesting actually because I think....I feel at the moment sort of aimless. Although I do lots of interesting things. I do feel aimless and I feel as if I should have applied a year, perhaps two years ago because as the children are growing up, they need me less and less .....I don't know ....I just feel that for me now, the time is right. My daughter starts secondary school in September and my son starts junior school at the same time. I don't know....there's just something inside me that says the time is right. I just feel I do not want another year of doing....well, similar things. I want something more.

The expressions,'I feel sort of aimless,' and 'I want something more', were typical articulations of the states of mind which foreshadowed a

decision to make changes in their lives. The experience of transition is thus manifested in terms of mood and feeling as well as in temporal formulations connected with family needs and considerations.

It is possible to discern in these and other interviews, a progressive thread which ran through the turning points and transitions as they were experienced by the women. The experience of motherhood served to increase confidence in themselves and in their ability to manage and care for their own children. This confidence was strengthened as they moved into the more public spheres of school life, playgroups, and other voluntary organsisations in which they found enjoyment and success in working with larger groups of children. Moreover, the experience of part-time study in preparation for B.Ed entry through Access courses, O' and A' level courses and Open University Foundation courses, gave them the beginnings of a belief in their academic confidence. This 'one-step-at-a-time' approach to their decision to teach is characterised throughout by a series of incremental and interconnecting transitions which brought about changes both to their families and within themselves. The subjective experience of transition and change as perceived through mood, feeling and identity is considered an important and integral part of the decision-making process as well as being a key factor in prompting thoughts and aspirations into action. Speaking of the positive experience she had

gained as a result of being an Open University student, Pamela Jones graphically describes the effect that this transition into the student role had on her self esteem and personal identity:

PJ I'm not somebody's mother and somebody's wife anymore. I'm a person in my own right. Its as simple as that. I feel as though I've got some worth. Its lovely. I've got a first name again.

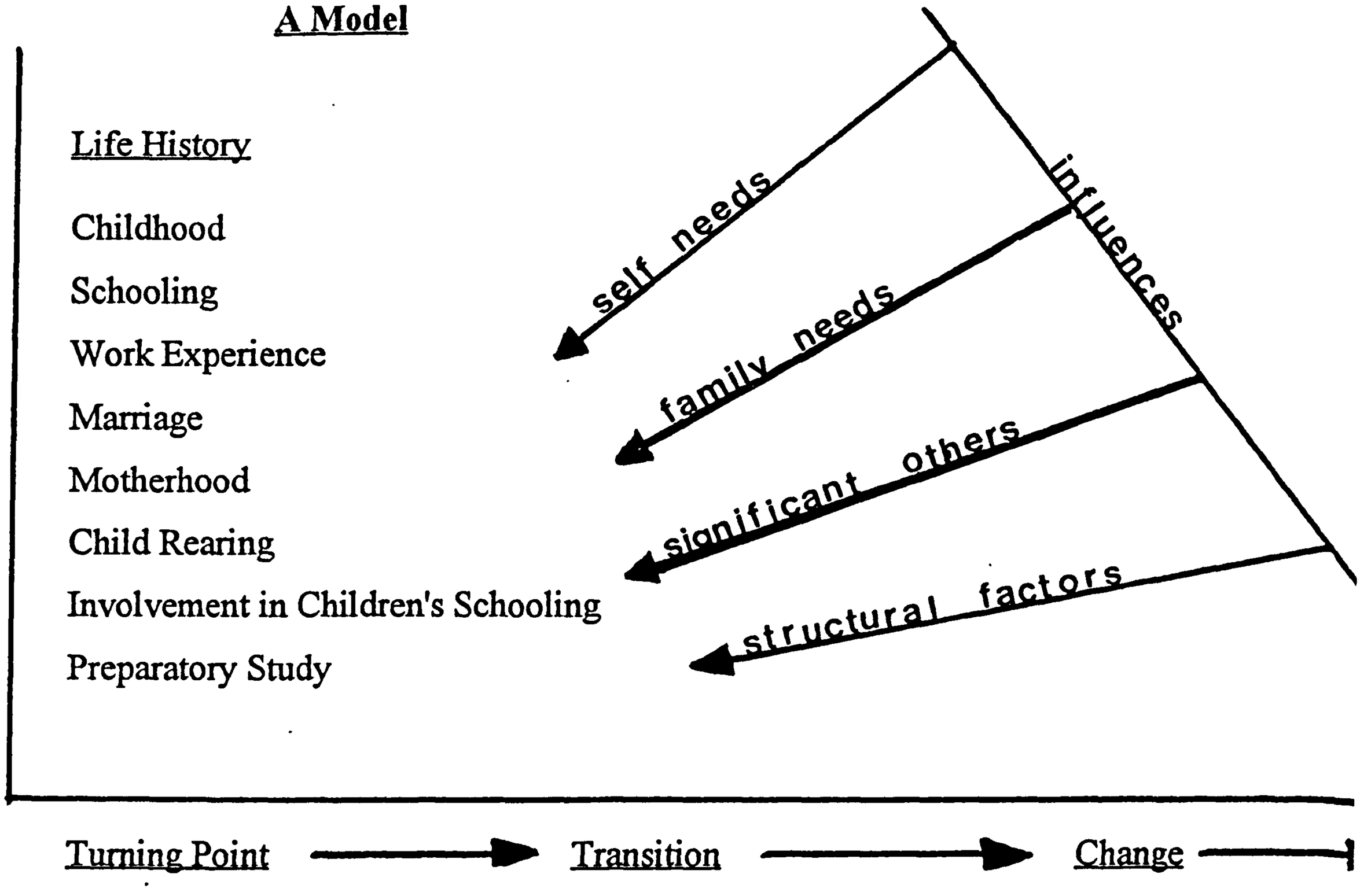
DD That really matters to you.

PJ Definitely. My husband knew when he married me that he wasn't going to marry somebody he could keep barefoot and pregnant. He wouldn't have even tried! I'm having a second life. I really feel as though I'm having a second life. I've got a second chance and I'm going to make the most of it.

The intersection of life history with turning points, transitions and the influences of self, family, structure and significant others can be expressed diagrammatically in order to show the complexity of the factors which led to the decision to teach, (see Figure 3.1). The trajectory of life course factors in relation to turning points and transitions needs to be seen as a dynamic, working model since a life course perspective is based on the premise that individuals are engaged in lifelong encounters with turning points and transitions. What the model is attempting to show is a snapshot view of the interrelating factors which led to the specific act of deciding to teach. Whilst this act is not experienced homegeneously, the data revealed that there were processes in common among the women in the research group, the

broad characteristics of which have been identified in boxes (a) and (b). Whilst the life course perspective assumes that turning points and transitions overlap with a potential for conflation, I have assumed some minor distinguishing features between them. For example, 'turning points' are characterised by mental and physical actions and changing mood states which are the precursers to the decision to act. In a sense, they act as the preparatory forerunners to an action which is likely to lead to signficant and ongoing changes in individual and family lives. Turning points can be progressive or regressive: they are tentative and exploratory with potential for change only if a number of interlinking factors conjoin. Some of these factors are indicated in box (a). 'Transitions' occur when a firm resolve is taken to act on the basis of the mental, emotional and physical experiences of a related turning point. The range of influences indicated in the model act upon both turning points and transitions. When the factors identified in box (b) are congruent with the needs of self and family; structural factors and the influence of significant others, the required action can be taken. When the decision to train for teaching has been taken, a transition can be said to have occurred which will have ongoing implications for change in the form of further turning points and transitions. In this dynamic model of change, it can be assumed that there will be many turning points and transitions during the course of a four year B.Ed

Figure 1: Trajectory of life course factors leading to the decision to teach: A Model



Application for Teacher Training

(a) Factors leading to turning points:	(b) Factors leading to transition:
- Interest in children's development - Growing independence of children - Assessment of self needs in terms of past, present and future lives - Need for 'something more' to fill the gap created by children's decreasing dependence - Voluntary work in school - Encouragement by others to take up teaching - Preparatory study for entry to teacher training	- Successful preparatory study - Heightened self esteem - Advisory interview for teacher training - Confirmation by others of suitability for teaching - Perception that the 'time is right' - Decision to apply for teacher training

degree course which will affect both the women and their families.

Significant Others

The data indicated several references to people who the women considered as influential in prompting them to take their wish to teach further. I have borrowed the term 'significant others' from Mead (1934) who argued that the self is a social, yet reflexive product whose identity is formed and shaped by the crucial part played by 'significant others' - people 'who have the most intimate socializing capability for the individual,' (cited in Nias, 1985, p.105). I have assumed a more literal interpretation of the word than Mead intended and taken the word 'significant' to mean those people in the women's lives whose advice and judgement they respect either by virtue of their perceived superior status in society, such as teachers, headteachers, vicars, for example, or by virtue of the intimacy and importance of their relationship in personal terms, as is the case, for example, with husbands, parents, children and close friends. It is also assumed that the women's judegement of who is 'significant' will alter according to need and the main hurdles of progress in the B.Ed course so that an education tutor or admired and respected student colleague, for example, may either 'displace' or add to the women's existing reference group of significant others

I was struck by the number of occasions in which the women acknowledged the significance of the part that their husband had played in encouraging them to take up teaching. In Bird and West's (1987) study of married women returners they observed that, 'for many women in their study, husbands, not children, were the problem,' (p.187). In their study, marriage often disadvantaged the womens' efforts to find work and, whilst few husbands objected to their wife going back to work, it was on the basis that they did not have to take part in child care or domestic work. Some of the husbands of the women in my study not only actively encouraged their wives to train as teachers, but took a full share of the housework and child care responsibilities during the first year of their course. Pauline Cash, for example, in relaying to me how important her husband's encouragement and support had been, told me that during the formal interview for the B.Ed Course, the headmaster who had interviewed her had been most discouraging about her application on the basis that she would not be able to teach as well as look after her own children. So effective was the communication of his prejudice against women with families taking up teaching, that on her return home afterwards, she told her husband that he had made her feel sufficiently guilty about becoming a student teacher to consider withdrawing her application.[1] It was her husband who reassured her, telling her that he believed in her potential and that

he would take time off work if the children were ill. On the few occasions during Pauline's first year when the children were ill, he kept his word and took leave from work whenever the necessity arose.[2] Pratical and emotional support on the part of some of the women's husbands was frequently mentioned. A related feature of this support was a form of reciprocal allegiance or 'repaid debt' which the men felt they owed to their wives because they had supported them when they were first developing their careers. This was the case with Carole Payne whose husband had already revealed his commitment to her wish to teach by helping her with her first essays on the Access course which she attended in addition to playing an active part in the domestic division of labour at home:

DD Were there any people who were significant in the chain of events which led up to your decision to take up teaching?

CP My husband, mostly. He was very supportive. I think he knows me very well and he knows that I've always wanted to do that and he's been terribly supportive and I think he believes that I would be a good teacher. We've discussed this when I've had self doubts and we worked together in the camps in America, and he believes that I can do the job.

This is not to suggest that all husbands were supportive of the women in the ways that I have described. Some were equivocal in their support and a few were openly hostile and obstructive, causing the women considerable conflict and distress in their first year. Others, having

pledged their support before enrolment on the course found reasons to withdraw it once the course had started. I make the point about a specific group of men who fully supported and encouraged their wives firstly because the positive sponsoring of women by men is seldom referred to in sociological studies of women, and secondly, because these particular men may be a special case inasmuch as they had all experienced a form of higher education themselves and therefore had some understanding and knowledge of what was entailed in being a full-time student. Pascall and Cox (1993a) made a similar observation about graduate husbands in their study of mature women returners to higher education.

Encouragement and belief in the women's potential for teaching from experienced teacher 'significant others' also counted for a great deal, particularly if they had seen and admired their work in the classroom. Gail Prince, for example, speaks of the role played by the infant teacher with whom she worked as a paid classroom help, in raising her confidence to the point where she felt fully justified in applying for a course of teacher training:

GP ....And having got to the stage where I could see myself on that path, then my confidence grew and when Heidi, who was our infant teacher said, "You know, you ought to go." I suppose I value her opinion because she's seen me working in the classroom and she's very, very good, and that was the final thing, I think.

Teachers and headteachers with whom the women worked before coming to train as teachers in both paid and unpaid capacities were sometimes seen as 'gatekeepers' to the profession (Spender, 1981) especially if they wrote references for the women in support of their application to train for teaching. Significant others also included family relatives who were in the teaching profession and considerable value was often attached to the encouragement of their parents, children and close friends, in their wish to teach.

The decision to teach is therefore a complex response to a range of historical, biographical and life course events. The transitions and turning points in the women's lives intersect with the lives of their husbands and children, the outcome of which is family and individual change. They feel unable to make the decision to teach in isolation from the needs of their families. The practical implications of becoming full-time student teachers have to be capable of being adapted and integrated into family life if they are to proceed in their aspiration in a way which will not fracture a highly valued part of their lives. Historical and family life events therefore shaped the women's decision to teach but not in a crude, deterministic way, (Yeandle, 1987). The women are able to exert a degree of control over their own transitions and timetables of action and in this sense, they have some power to alter the trajectory of their life course. The point at which they acted upon

their decision to teach occurred when a conjunction of salient life course factors met with the subjective experiences of confidence, enhanced self esteem and an acknowledged belief in their teaching potential by significant others.

The political and educational context outlined at the beginning of the chapter might, justifiably have caused some of the women to think twice, or at least very seriously about the wisdom of making a formal application to enter a four year B.Ed course. Major changes were sweeping through state primary schools and the tide of public criticism inveighed against the teaching profession showed few signs of diminishing. However, none of the women appeared to be deterred by these concerns. They were acutely aware of the dilemmas within state education and alive to current issues concerning educational standards and the new educational legislation working its way through schools. Two points made by the women are worth making which may have some bearing on their unshakeable commitment to teacher training: the first was informed by pragmatism. The women would be among the first cohorts of student teachers to be trained to manage the implications of the Education Reform Act and by the time that they had completed their course of training, their view was that many of the problems currently being experienced by teachers would have been resolved, adjusted to or eased with the passage of time. The second was what

could be described as a 'healthy scepticism' about what they perceived as a reality gap between their views about what was happening in schools as parents, volunteer and paid helpers, and those of politicians and journalists. Put simply, many said that what they read in the papers or heard on the radio or television, did not match what they saw going on everyday in classrooms. These reactions might be considered to be naïve or overly optimistic but they serve to illustrate the strength of their determination to achieve an ambition they had been working towards for several years. They had already invested too much to be dissuaded from a decision which was often rooted in their history and which was already beginning to become part of their family lives.

A few weeks after this interview in the following September, all the research group with the exception of three, had enrolled on the B.Ed course. The next chapter examines the women's early experience of novitiate student life which is often an uneasy combination of anxiety and euphoria. It explores the hopes and fears about their ability to cope with sustained academic demands and family responsibility along with the kind of changes they have to make in the first term as they learn to become student teachers.

NOTES

(1) The involvement of LEA teachers and headteachers in the interviewing of candidates for initial teacher training courses was part of the CATE (Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education) criteria for the approval of B.Ed and PGCE courses. CATE is now defunct and it responsibilities were passed to the Teacher Training Agency in 1994.

The incident of prejudice shown towards Pauline Cash as a mature student with family responsibilities was not uncommon, particularly among headteachers of *both* sexes. This sometimes made the use of local teachers in the selection of potential B.Ed recruits, problematic. Given the formal requirement to use serving teachers in the selection of student teachers, this and other incidents of demonstrable prejudice during B.Ed interviews suggests a need for equal opportunities training in relation to higher education. However, it should be noted that, in general, the institution, candidates and LEA teachers valued their involvement in the B.Ed selection process.

(2) It is, however, unlikely to be simply a matter of individual consent or mutual agreement. Men have to be in the kind of employment which will tolerate leave of absence for childcare purposes. The culture of the workplace and the social class of the individual are also significant factors in the husband's ability to take a more equal share of domestic and childcare responsibilities. The relationship between social class, occupational status and workplace culture with regard to men's role in domestic childcare has not been possible to investigate in this case study but it is signalled here as a much needed focus for research attention.

CHAPTER 4

BECOMING A STUDENT

In his study of teacher socialization, Lacey asked the following questions: 'What does this process mean for individuals? How do they perceive it? What does it feel like to go through it? (1977, p.56). These questions have, to some extent, informed my study of mature student adaptation and they were particularly important in influencing the issues selected for discussion in the second and third interviews (see appendix 2). Like Lacey (1977), I did not see the mature women as oversocialised, passive and helpless recipients of institutional forces. Adopting his interactionist and constructivist model of socialization, I saw the women as creative individuals and seekers of solutions who had some control over their own socialization (p.22). In his study of American schoolteachers, Lortie (1975) refers to the 'self socialization' of teachers in which, 'one's personal predispositions are not only relevant but, in fact, stand at the core of becoming a teacher.' (p.79). Similarly, I believed that not only did the mature women possess an ability to shape their socialization to suit their own purposes and interests, but that their 'personal predispositions' stood at the core of

becoming a student which included their realities as mothers and wives. When the women began the B.Ed course they brought with them a set of collective life experiences and personal biography which fundamentally informed their interests and belief systems. For example, a central interest for women with young children would be the need to learn to become a student teacher in a way which was continuous and integrative with family life. I am therefore extending Lacey's model of socialization to take account of the influence of biography and history on the women's student teacher adaptation.[1]

The second interview explored the first six weeks of the mature women's induction into higher education in the autumn term of 1991. It dealt with a very short span of time, albeit an important and highly significant period, when the newness and strangeness of the situation was likely to have had a strong impact on their feelings and perceptions as they were initiated into the student role. In order to deal with this condensed and tightly bunched set of experiences in a way which illluminates processes of change and understanding, I have organised the data analysis into a set of prima facie categories which serve the dual purpose of making use of the language which the women themselves used to describe their initial experiences, as well as providing a logical chronology of events as they broadly occurred within the first weeks of their induction. The following is an outline of the first year B.Ed

induction programme which provides the context for the women's reactions to their first week:

Day One - Monday

9am - Meet in lecture theatre for an introductory talk by the 1st year B.Ed coordinator, B.Ed course leader and Dean of Faculty.

10am - Enrolment. Induction form completion: this was a lengthy form which requested details of home addresses, telephone numbers, age, title and first name by which they like to be referred; subject study choices; travel arrangements including details about whether they would be travelling to the college with fellow students and, in order to accommodate this, an indication of whether they would prefer an early or late start to the day.[2]

10.30am - Induction to the library.

11.00am - Study skills session. An introduction to the use of note-taking, reading, writing essays and the use of referencing procedures. All students received a study skills booklet.

12.00 - Students free to go home.

Day Two - Tuesday

Further study skills sessions and library induction for those groups of students who did not have them on Monday.
Introduction to computer skills, word processing and information technology.

Day Three - Wednesday

Fresher's Fayre - all day.[3]
Optional coach trip to places of local and historical interest.

Day Four - Thursday

Commencement of 1st year B.Ed teaching programmes.

Day Five - Friday

1st year B.Ed teaching programmes.

The First Day

The arrival of this day had been anticipated with great expectation and excitement for months and in some cases, years, by the women in the study. In their eyes, this moment was charged with special significance as it symbolised the achievement of all that they had worked, planned and studied for. Their reactions to it were vividly recalled in the interview and some of the women had, on my request, kept an informal diary of their feelings and reactions to events during the first few days. Others commentated that the memory of the first day was so indelibly imprinted on their minds that they would never forget it. These early student experiences were characterised by emotionally charged reactions of mainly negative and unpleasant psychological states of mind. Typical feelings were described as terror, panic, shell-shock, inadequacy, disappointment, frustration, confusion, chaos and a strong sense of being overwhelmed both by the large numbers of students [4] and the volumes of paperwork which they were given. Many reported feelings of exhaustion and demoralisation at the end of the first day, some to the point of not wishing to return on the next day. A factor which had exacerbated the mature women's feeling of panic from the beginning of the day onwards, was the unanticipated volume of traffic on the roads leading to the college. Enrolment day was common for all students so that virtually every

student and every tutor was required to be in college on that day. This factor, combined with the vastly increased student numbers compared to the previous year, resulted in unprecedented traffic jams on most local roads. Unless students lived within walking distance of the college or set out from their homes very early, most students arrived late for the introductory talk. The consequence of this was to cause most students to arrive in an intensely flustered and agitated state which was only marginally alleviated by the realisation that they were not the only late arrivals. The following is Lucy Patron's [5] account of her reactions to this state of affairs and the effect it had upon her and is quoted verbatim from her diary:

> LP 8.30am. Leaving home. Really excited and anticipating the day. 9.15am. Sheer panic. I'm stuck in the traffic and I'm supposed to be here at 9. 0' clock! 1.30pm. We're told to go home again and I felt, oh dear, is that it? Really disappointed and fed up. The next day we spent wandering around and not doing a lot and I really did think, why am I bothering? I think I'll stay at home tomorrow and not come again.

Most students had expected to be immediately engaged in a full programme of activities which were relevant to teacher training. That they did very little but complete forms for half a day, came as a surprise and disappointment. Many of them had come straight from the world of work and had been used to the routine and discipline of what they called a 'Nine till five day'. They had expected to begin their

training as a teacher on day one. Helen Cornwall recounts the anti-climax of the first few days which was compounded by contradictory feelings of exhaustion as a result of doing what she describes as, 'nothing':

> HC I'm not going to to forget how I felt on that first day because it all came as a bit of an anti-climax, the whole first week. I think I was so excited about coming and when I walked into the lecture theatre on that first morning I didn't feel as nervous as I should do. I looked around and I was surprised at just how many mature students there were. Then I just wanted to get going and I found that first week such hard going. I was shattered by the end of it and I felt shattered through doing nothing.

Doing 'nothing' did not of course, literally mean total inactivity. The women were, in fact, in a state of highly charged tension in which they were actively engaged in the process of getting to know other students, listening to what course leaders and heads of school were telling them and finding their way around a large and unfamiliar institution. They were, in fact, absorbing large amounts of new and incoming data about the place in which they were going to spend the next four years. They were trying to read and digest vast quantities of literature connected with course and timetable information. In odd moments they were trying to read and make sense of it. Much of the language and terminology would have been unfamiliar to them. Lists of books suggested for reading, questions for seminar activities and titles of forthcoming essays were read with a certain amount of awe and dread.

They were like strangers in a new and foreign land whose terrain and language they did not understand. They were, for the time being, outsiders in a 'country' they had longed to travel to. But now they had arrived, it was not as they had hoped. 'How will I manage to read all those books?' 'What is a "seminar"?' How will I cope with the essays?' 'Will I get lost?' 'When are we going to do something that relates to children and teaching?' These were some of the questions which pervaded their thoughts as they tried to relate to an experience which made them feel ill at ease and dislocated. Doing 'nothing', as far as the women were concerned meant that they were not yet learning to be teachers and what they were doing instead did not count in their eyes as valid 'student teacher activity'. The women were used to tightly packed days of task-orientated labour which included child care, domestic chores, part-time work and study. To find that they were tired after having spent much of the day sitting in lecture rooms and receiving paper work, was an alien and incomprehensible experience to them. Even worse was the experience of having to articulate this to members of their families when they arrived home. Monica Griffiths describes the sense of failure and inadequacy which she felt as a result of the day's experiences:

> MG And other people don't help. They all ask you, 'How did you get on?' 'What did you do?' And you feel such a total failure and

you say, 'Well actually, I didn't do anything except wander around and collect armfulls of paper.

Feelings of inadequacy and failure were frequently mentioned by the women during this first week. Four students recalled how intensely threatened and inadequate they had felt when the First Year Coodinator had, in the course of the introductory talk, mentioned the words, 'course termination' as an action that would be taken for students if they were deemed to be unsuitable for teaching. Doubtless this was intended for the ears of students whose aspirations to teach might prove to be less than serious. Given the considerable increase in the B.Ed intake during that year, there was a widely felt concern among education tutors that there would be a larger than usual group of first years whose motivation, academic and professional potential was questionable. However, the effect of this bureaucratic terminology was to strike fear into the minds of some mature students. Such was its effect upon them that the women spent much of their second interview describing how demoralised they felt upon hearing these words. One of these students was Pat Grade, a buoyant student to whom other students gravitated on the first day because of her ready wit and humour. Many of the women commented that Pat's presence had been reassuring and that she had broken the tension by making them laugh. However, despite Pat's apparent success in 'impression management', (Goffman, 1959), she had been so devastated by the emphasis that had been placed upon this

punitive outcome in the talk, that she began to have serious doubts about her decision to become a B.Ed student:

> PG ..... all of a sudden in the introductory talk, the tutor started saying about course termination. It terrified me and pass marks for exams and resits and that, and I thought, shall I go home now? This is not for me, I'm too old for this. I'm bound to be the one who fails and all the older students were nodding their heads saying, 'This is us'. It had a lot of influence on me. I've been in everyday now at 9.30am. I've either gone to the computer room, the library or I've been reading or writing. I feel I've got to prove myself. I mean I got more and more depressed as the week went on.
> (Read from diary) 'Now more than ever, wished I'd chosen to stay at home or work full-time in Tesco's.'

From the tutor's perspective, the decision to make a point of this issue had arisen as a result of widespread anxiety among tutors about increased work loads, overcowded teaching rooms, congested car parks and seminar groups of twenty-eight students. Tutors were also sharply aware of the mounting criticisms about standards in teacher training from both Government and educationalists, (cf Alexander, Rose & Woodhead, 1992; Lawlor, 1990; O'Hear, 1989) which had begun to penetrate the institution in the form of some defensive posturing between senior management and education staff. The threat of sanctions as a means of social control designed to ensure the conformity of student teachers in attitudes to work and behaviour, is not new and is deeply rooted in the culture of teacher training institutions (cf Delamont, 1978a, 1978b, 1989; Dyhouse, 1976, 1992). However, for

the mature women, it struck the wrong note and had a depressing and demoralising effect on them for some time to come: As Geraldine Wing, one of the four students affected by this issue, put it:

GW I remember thinking, I could cope with this at Christmas but not on the first day.

Family influences inescapably affected the mature student experience from the early moments of the first day onwards. Three students, for example, had missed the first day altogether. One was unable to come because of attendance at her father's funeral and two others did not arrive as a consequence of their children's illness the night before. Even when family events did not prevent their actual arrival on the day, circumstances at home conspired to make their first week a highly stressful and worrying experience. Pamela Jones, for example, reported that one of her parents had suddenly been taken ill and was now in hospital and both her children had reacted badly to her absence at college. Family events, biography and history pervaded the mature student's adaptation to the student role throughout the year.

Settling In

Despite the initial dislocation and reality shock of the first few days, there appeared to be a discernible moment when the mature women felt more at ease and comfortable within the institution. This moment was often accompanied by physical and psychological feelings of relief and a calmer mental disposition. Nascent patterns of routine slowly emerged

at college and at home. They began to see the connections between symbols on timetables and noticeboards and what actually went on in the seminar room or lecture theatre. The newness and strangeness of the first few days gradually gave way to a more predictable pattern of events once the timetable began to operate. What was at first an incomprehensible maze of buildings, corridors and rooms became less daunting as they familiarised themselves with the college and built up an internal map of the campus geography. These indicators of initial adjustment to new places, routines, roles and procedures are often collectively referred to as 'settling in'. It is an important, recognisable and well understood part of adjustment to any new place, job, role or transition. What is perhaps less well understood are the factors which account for this transition. What, for example, happens to individuals which makes them feel that they have reached the 'settling in' phase of adjustment? How is this experienced by the mature student? What helps this process to occur amd what is its significance in the broader pattern of student socialization?

One of the early manifestations of the 'settling in' stage came in the form of the first teaching session. This was the point at which the women felt they had made a start on the curriculum of teacher training. What was described by them as the first 'proper'[6] teaching session, came towards the end of the first week or the beginning of the second

week. At last they were engaged in the actual business of learning to become a teacher. This was what they had come to the college to do and the experience was often accompanied by feelings of relief and an upturn in psychological mood after the perceived anti-climax of the first few days. Ann Major's reactions to the first, timetabled session of the term were typical of many of the mature students' accounts of this experience:

> AM But on the Friday we had our first proper teaching session and after that, I really felt uplifted. I felt good and I went home for the weekend thinking, 'Oh great! This is good.' It sort of changed from Thursday night to Friday morning and its done that quite a lot over the first few weeks. It was up and down quite a lot. It was, 'Oh, how am I ever going to manage this?' And then at other times, it would be, 'Well, I've done that. I did that alright, you know, it was ok. I can do it.'

This phase of adjustment is characterised by frequent swings of mood. Feeling 'high' and then 'low' were common descriptions of the women's subjective experience. Indeed, the number of incidences in the data where the women refer to themselves and their prevailing mood state is worthy of comment and analysis. In her study of teachers at work, Nias (1989) comments on the incidence of what she calls, 'self referentialism'. Drawing upon notions of the 'self' as it is conceptualised in the theoretical formulations of symbolic interactionism, she points to the importance which teachers attach to a sense of personal identity in their relationship with their work.

According to Nias, this stems partly from a belief that they exist as people before they become teachers and partly from the nature of their work which demands a high degree of "investment in their 'selves'," (Nias, 1989, p.2). In the context of the arduous preparations with regard to study and family arrangements which many of the women had to make in order to commit themselves to a full-time course of study, they too had invested a high degree of their 'selves' in the teacher training course. If they did not succeed or the course did not prove to be the experience they hoped for, a great deal of self-investment would have been wasted and the consequent disruption to their personal and family lives not worth the effort and energy directed into it. It is thus possible to understand the women's elation when there was a congruence between expectations and reality, and their feelings of disappointment and despair when they did not feel they could cope with the course or that what they were doing was irrelevant to their purpose or discordant with expectations. The impact of these early days on their sensibilities and emotions would seem to be an unavoidable part of the 'settling in' process. Their ability to be reflexive about their subjective state of mind was therefore an important indicator of how they were experiencing change. In phenomenological terms, the articulation of the women's prevailing mood state and the reasons for its occurrence, served as a kind of 'running commentary' with the self which helped

them to make sense of what was happening to them. Feeling 'high and low' and 'up and down' was an inescapable part of the neophyte student experience.

What actually took place in these first teaching sessions was very important to the women in helping them to adjust to their new role as students. For example, using the physical paraphernalia of books, course booklets and timetables helped them to feel that they were engaged in what counted as legitimate student activity. But the form and content of the seminar or lecture as well as the pedagogical style of the lecturer, were equally important in enabling them to feel, as one mature student put it, 'that things are beginning to drop into place.' Beth Wells, for example, recounted the pleasure she experienced at finding that she could concentrate and absorb the aademic content of seminar sessions:

DD So at what point did you feel that things had started as far as you were concerned?

BW Very early on when we went into groups and started looking at texts and things and certainly by the end of the first week. I surprised myself with my concentration. I feel as if I really am absorbed in what people are giving me all the time and I so look forward to each lecture and I actually lap it up.

Diane Young spoke of the importance of being able to relate to the tutors. What mattered to her was that her tutor was approachable and did not expect too much too soon. His own warm and engaging style of

interaction placed a value on the importance of their experiences as people:

DY Well, I liked the fact that my Primary Curriculum [7] tutor was mature and he'd got children as well and he'd been in schools for a lot of years. He obviously knew all about it and as well he took the seriousness off it. He sort of told us about a few of his experiences which put everybody at ease. I think we thought, 'Oh thank goodness, we don't have to go in and be a teacher straight away, you can be human as well!'

Many of the women were impressed by the lengths to which their tutors went to make them feel relaxed within their various teaching groups. They were particularly impressed by the professionalism and enthusiasm of many of the tutors and looked upon some of them as role models. However, not all the mature students spoke in such favourable terms and a few felt decidedly ill at ease with their tutors who did not impress them with their style of teaching or mode of delivery. Such cases were, however, rare and most spoke in very positive terms about their tutors.

Another factor which helped things 'begin to fall into place', was the perceived relevance of the course content with their own experience. Two programmes, for example, were concerned with child development and the development of language, respectively. These were particularly enjoyed by the women because they were able to relate the conceptual content to their experience of motherhood. Gail Prince's comments below were typical of the responses of a number of mature

women students:

GP .....and you start thinking, oh yes, that makes sense, particularly the Language Development programme in relation to how children learn at home. I was beginning to relate to some of the things on reading which I used to think as a parent, and it sort of eased me into it, if you like. It was coming at it from another angle.....You start thinking, oh I remember that, and, oh yes, that's why.....you know, and that has begun to fall into place as well.

The continuity of course content to the women's experience of motherhood placed a value on their life experience and made it possible for them to make early links with theory and practice which, in turn, helped them to feel they were beginning to ease into the student role. A further indication of early adjustment is a perception on the part of the women that they were now more in control of events. This was often articulated as, 'coping'. Typical expressions were, 'Ok, I'm coping.' 'I can cope with this.' What this meant was that they were understanding the lectures, making sense of the reading, beginning to experiment with routines and arrangements which helped them feel they were keeping 'on top of' of the many demands being made of them. This perception was often accompanied by a discernible release of tension after a strenuous or difficult task had been successfully undertaken. It served as a benchmark of nascent adjustment which confirmed their belief that they had made the right decision to train as teachers. Until this point in the induction period, doubts rather than

belief in their ability to 'make the grade' as student teachers, had been uppermost in their minds, (Becker, Geer & Hughes, 1968). Pat Grade articulated the way in which she experienced this moment of transition as one in which she no longer felt 'an outsider':

> PG With the Language Development programme I could understand what was going on. I could contribute. I knew what was happening. Because I did the A' level psychology, I could slip in lovely there and I thought, 'Oh well, it's not as bad as I thought it would be.' I could feel the relief flooding into me and I thought, 'Ah, I can relax!' I knew what was being discussed and I didn't feel an outsider.....Now I feel I can cope.

The mature students' inchoate perceptions that they were coping, frequently occurred at some point within the first two weeks of their student experience. However, it was seldom a stable perception. The moment recounted by Pat Grade was generally experienced fleetingly and was quickly displaced by another session or activity in which they felt unequal to the demands being made upon them. 'Coping perceptions' were therefore context specific and entirely dependent on the subject discipline, aspect of education or situation in which they are currently engaged. Nonetheless, these transitory 'moments' of feeling in harmony with and in control of what was going on around them, were remembered as important anchoring experiences when the next bout of instability overwhelmed them causing a resurgence of doubt and uncertainty about their ability to cope.

A key factor in the creation of more stable perceptions or what Sherif and Wilson (1953) have referred to as the process of 'ego-anchoring' is the formation of relationships with significant others. In his study of student physicians, Merton (1957) wrote that,

> 'Socialization takes place primarily through social interaction with people who are significant for the individual - in the medical school, probably with faculty members above most others, but importantly also with fellow-students.....'
>
> (p.287).

Making friends with other students was perceived by the women to be of central importance in helping them to settle into the first few weeks. What mattered to them in the development of these friendships were the opportunities it provided to share and compare experiences both within and outside college. As one student put it, 'it helps to have someone to touch base with.' Membership of a stable friendship group became an important reference point against which the mature women could make comparisons with their own perceptions of what it felt like to be a student and the problems and difficulties they were facing. It helped to know that they were not alone in their experience of uncertainty and feelings of inadequacy and that others were feeling the same. The latter function of group membership has given rise to the term, 'reference group'. This term has been used extensively by sociologists and social psychologists to explain how attitudes and perspectives are acquired in the process of socialization, (Nias, 1985, 1989; Gehrke,

1981; Martin, 1970; Sherif & Wilson, 1953; Shibutani, 1972, inter alia). Martin defined reference groups as, 'Groups from which one takes one's standards and forms one's attitudes', as well as 'groups with which one compares oneself and one's position,' (cited in Gehrke, 1981, p.34). Belonging to a reference group provided the women with a set of norms against which they could create ' a stable perceptual field', (Nias, 1989, p.46). Gaining a group perspective was at once reassuring and unifying. Christine Kift made the point well:

CK And I think also the first thing you walk in and think is, how many other mature students are there? Am I going to be the only one? And the feeling that, gosh everything outside college is total chaos whereas everyone else is just coasting along nicely. Once you begin to realise that other people have got the same problems, then obviously you think, ah yes, ok. It's not that bad.

The unstable nature of individual perceptions gave rise, over time, to a group perspective which was used to interpret and assess new situations. According to Nias, 'it determines what is accepted as information about reality', (1989, p.46). Over the course of the year these early relationships became firmly established and offered friendship, support and a central frame of reference for the women through which a common set of interests and way of interpreting the world was achieved, (Lacey, 1977, p.14). In short, it was the beginning of a student perspective which came to play a significant part in shaping the

process of student adaptation.

Feeling Like A Student

During the first term the students were given a broad introduction to all the subjects of the primary national curriculum, micro computor technology and the developmental aspects of language and children's learning. Interspersed throughout the term were short, two and three-day blocks of school experience during which the students mainly observed and carried out activities which were prescribed by the college. As far as work load was concerned, the students were expected to read in preparation for most seminars and lectures. Such reading was generally fairly specific and short, seldom involving more than one or two chapters from a core text. Students were expected to make contributions during seminars, mainly on a voluntary basis, but occasionally a more formal demand would be made upon them to provide a lead on a particular issue or topic. By the end of the term all students had to submit three, two and a half thousand word essays and a self-audit of micro computor activities.

Once the term was underway I wanted to investigate how they were experiencing the demands placed on them at home alongside the demands of academic study. For example, did they feel like a B.Ed student yet? If so, could they articulate the signs and changes which had taken place to make them feel they had acquired a 'student' identity?

Feelings of euphoria and enthusiasm alongside states of intense anxiety continued to predominate their early student experience. Beth Wells and Carole Payne gave some idea of the different ways in which individuals reacted to the initial reality of becoming a student:

Beth Wells

DD And has the Course so far met your expectations?

BW Probably more exciting than I thought it would be. I don't know if I expected it to be as enthusiastic and thought provoking and um....revolutionary almost, in some of the ideas and approaches. I didn't realise that education could be so exciting really. And I feel that all of the tutors are so enthusiastic about their subjects and I do feel filled with enthusiasm by them.

Carole Payne

DD How are things going so far?

CP Up and down I would say. I'm really enjoying it but perhaps becoming a bit overwhelmed. Just the sheer volume of having to cope with the family and really fitting everything in, so I think that's it.

One of the reasons for the differential reactions of Beth and Carole is closely related to their particular family context as much as to any perceived personality differences. For example, Beth Wells had two children who were both settled at junior school and who received a great deal of emotional and practical support from her husband. She had thought very carefully about the timing of her decision to train for teaching and was very secure in her belief that the time was 'right' both for herself and her family. Carole Payne also had firm support from

her husband and children but, in addition to two boys, who were both at school, she had a two year old baby daughter who was left with a child minder during the day. The demands of a young infant on top of other family responsibilities, meant that her daily routine was more complex than Beth's and this, coupled with some anxiety and conflict about being separated from her daughter, caused a greater preoccupation about having to 'fit everything in' than was the case with Beth. Carole's enjoyment of the early part of the course did not, therefore, have the energetic enthusiasm described by Beth (see appendix 1). The changes that take place in the social person as they become B.Ed students are thus inextricably linked to the life and family perspectives which the mature women bring to their student socialization. This will be a recurring theme throughout the analysis of student adaptation and will form a central feature of its explanation and understanding.

At what point do the women *feel* like students? It might be assumed that this is a straightforward role transition which occurs unproblematically at the point at which a particular course begins since they are addressed as students by tutors and all other college personnel from the moment of enrolment onwards. However, it was clear from the data that the women's identification with the student role was tenuous and partial. When asked if they felt like a student after three to

six weeks' experience on the course, some of the women described themselves as wearing different 'hats' depending on where they were at different points during the day. For example, when they were in college they talked of 'wearing a B.Ed hat', but when they went home to their families, they reverted to their roles as mothers and wives Mary Croft, for example, described how she perceived the roles of student and mother as separate and split off from each other (cf Edwards, 1993):

DD Do you feel more like a B.Ed student than you did five weeks ago and if so, what's made you feel that way?

MC Its been quite a gradual thing.....I've still not got the B.Ed hat on out of college. I sort of put it on the back burner, I think.....so its very much a split thing.

This is an example of the way in which gender specific behaviour intersected with life history and student teacher adaptation. Similarly, when the mature students were in school they were conscious that they were there in a student teacher capacity but, because of their long association with classrooms as mother helpers, the transition from the mother helper to the student teacher role was not a smooth or linear process. Some of the women talked of 'feeling different' when they went into school but their identity as a B.Ed student had not yet crystallized to form part of a stable self-image. Monica Griffiths, for example, continued to help out in a local school on Wednesday afternoons [8] where the children continued to treat her in her former

role as mother helper. However, since she had been on the B.Ed Course she felt that she had changed. She articulated her understanding of this transitional state of affairs as being there with her 'Mum's hat on', but in a different way to her former experience:

> MG I find my Wednesdays are extremely useful actually being in school, not as a student, because I'm there in a totally different capacity and I'm not there with my college hat on. I'm there with my Mum's hat on but its not the same as it was before.

The work of Merton (1957) on self-image and Ball (1972) on identity, is useful in offering an understanding of why the women's defintion of themselves as students is tentative and fleeting at this point. In his study of student physicians, Merton (1957) wrote about the gradual transformation of neophyte students into physicians who were able to identify themselves with their professional role, (1957, p.179). As early as their first year of training, some of the student physicians came progressively to think of themselves as doctors. The key factor in this transformation was the kind of interaction they had with faculty members, classmates, nurses, and patients. Merton suggested that their self-image varied according to whom they were interacting with at the time but was primarily in their interaction with patients, that medical students were most likely to see themselves as physicians. If their technical competence was matched to the task which the patient's needs required, the patient was likely to assign the student with the status of

doctor. Merton concluded from this that,

> 'Self-images appear, then, to be in part "reflections" of the expectations of others. As students are defined by their patients so do they tend to define themselves,'
>
> (1957, p.183).

This is a useful starting point in the process of understanding the womens' transformation of identity as mothers and wives to include that of B.Ed students. However, there were crucial differences between the womens' experience of studenthood and that of the student physicians. Firstly, B.Ed students are not, in the early part of their training, given sustained contact with children in an apprentice teaching capacity, as was the case with Merton's student doctors and patients. The student teacher's initial role in the classroom is essentially that of observer and teacher helper. In addition, the brevity of the two and three-day excursions into the classroom does not allow for the possibility of building the kind of relationships with children and teachers which might have helped to confirm a view of themselves as student teachers. Secondly, the women, unlike Merton's student physicians, went home at the end of each day to their families, where the expectations of children, husbands continued to confirm them in their roles as mothers and wives. Their self-image as B.Ed students was thus temporarily placed on 'the back burner' until they next returned to college the next day.

Ball's (1972) distinction between 'situated' and 'substantial' identity is perhaps more useful in its ability to offer an understanding of the

transitory nature of the mature women's identity as B.Ed students. Ball's view that identities have a temporal dimension is therefore particularly relevant in the mature student context. According to Ball (1972) substantial identities

> have a more stable and enduring quality. Situated identities are more transient, more dependent on time, place and situation, though they interact with substantial identities which may affect them.
>
> (cited in Woods, 1990, p.138).

Being a B.Ed student is thus part of the mature women's 'situated identity' since, at this point in the year, it was dependent entirely on the situation in which they were at the time. At college, therefore, they 'wore' the B.Ed student 'hat' but when they were at home, they reverted to the roles which were part of their 'substantial identity.' The temporal nature of the women's situated identity as B.Ed students was expressed clearly by Christine Kift:

DD Do you feel that you are a B.Ed student now?

CK Ye....es, but not.....it's not a sort of finite feeling because these days now I have so many equally important things that it's like another job. I don't feel I'm a student. I still feel ultimately a mother and a wife and a student.....the three things.

'Feeling like a B.Ed student' was, however, distinguished by discernible and tangible signs which indicated the beginnings of a gradual process of change. Pauline Cash, for example, referred to the increased

interest she now took in the newspapers, her children's education and how she questioned everything the children and her husband said to her at home. She had reached a point where she no longer took anything for granted and as a result, described herself somewhat wryly, as 'boring everyone silly'! Questioning assumptions they had previously taken for granted and seeing things with 'different eyes' were frequently referred to by the mature women as aspects of the many changes they felt had taken place since they had become B.Ed students. When asked what palpable things had helped them to feel like B.Ed students, they referred to the presence of books, having to prepare essays, spending much more time reading as well as gaining a clearly defined sense that they were learning and making progress towards their goal of becoming a teacher. In their communication of these factors, they conveyed a sense of excitement about doing all the things they had imagined students did when they came to college or university. This is evident in the following response given by Pauline Cash as she identified the first time she felt like a B.Ed student:

> PC ...it was a strange feeling but it was very exciting. It must have been the second week, when the school experience was on the horizon and the essays and things like that. And I really felt sort of part of it and that, you know, I'm here!

The physical impedimenta of books, paper, pens and text highlighters were often cited by the women as helping them to feel like students.

A similar analogy might be that of the student doctor wearing a white coat and a stethoscope round his/her neck for the first time. However, the two factors most frequently referred as confirmatory of the student role were the increased time they were spending on reading and the preparation for their first essay. Beth Wells identified these two factors along with a clear sense of direction as being more important than anything else in making her feel she was a student:

> BW Having a lot of books and making a start on the first essay, more than anything. Always having something to read that's valuable because having a direction is nice and having the books around is good.

These were some of the signs and manifestations of change which led the women to form a construction of themselves as B.Ed students. Their identity as B.Ed students at this early juncture is not secure and has not yet become part of their substantial identity. But the women were able to identify specific changes in their thinking, actions, daily routines and perceptions which indicated that a transitional process between situated and substantial identity was taking place. However, the movement between these two aspects of self is not a homogeneous or straightforward, progressive process and there were shifts back and forth between situated and substantial identity depending on the context of the moment. For example, a mature woman may have a strongly integrated student identity whilst interacting with children in the

classroom, but a weaker, more situated identity when interacting with college tutors. When the women have a stable and firmly constructed belief in themselves as B.Ed students they can be said to have successfully integrated the student role within their substantial identity. The point at which this occurs is dependent upon a number of factors including the passage of time and the establishment of manageable routines and study habits. In relation to the latter point, the submission of the first essay was seen by almost all the women as a kind of watershed upon whose successful outcome depended their credibilty as students. Indeed several women commented that they were unable to believe in themselves as students until after they had passed the first essay and, as a consequence, it came to be regarded as a significant 'rite of passage' in their student teacher socialization. Equally important, were the actions of the women themselves and the preparedness of their families to accept their student identity. Ball (1972) made the point that, 'for interaction with others to be able to occur, there must be at least some correspondence between presented self and assigned identity,' (cited in Woods, 1990, p.138). If there is too great a gap between the personal identity and the image which members of the family have of the individual, then the individual has to find ways of ensuring that her new identity is accepted and understood by family members. This was sometimes a stumbling block for the mature women because their new

student role had little advantage for their family with respect to domestic responsibilities. Once studying began in earnest after about four weeks into the term, husbands and children found themselves faced with a more evenly distributed division of labour in the home than had been the case hitherto. This was not always welcomed by family members. In these cases the women had to engage in a great deal of negotiative work. Central to this negotiation was the use of strategies which ensured that their student identity did not become a source of conflict and dispute within the family. For some women, negotiation was not necessary since the promise of support was upheld and sustained by the family. These women enjoyed consistent and affiliative support which included help of an emotional, practical and academic kind. By comparison with others, these women formed a particularly privileged and advantaged sub-group. For other women, family negotiation became a source of conflict and tension but despite problems and internal family struggles, they eventually succeeded in finding strategies which made it possible for them to acquire a strong student identity which became part of their substantial identity. In these cases, families came to accept that the person they had previously thought of as their mother or wife, was now also a student. A small number of women had little success in negotiations with their families and for them, their student identity became an obstacle to harmonious family life.

Successful integration of the student role is thus likely to be a smoother and more positive experience for those women who had emotional, practical and academic support. Another group of women experienced considerable friction and family disunity before negotiation eventually succeeded and a third group had extreme difficulty in moving beyond the situated student identity because negotiations and bids for change within the family had failed. What part does the actual choice of strategies play in these outcomes? What kind of strategies are they? Why do some women succeed and others fail and how far are strategies the outcome of structural constraints or individual choice?

This chapter has been primarily concerned to reveal processes of beginning student teacher socialization. In so doing, it has uncovered other factors which also have a significant role to play in the differential experience of student adaptation: these have included the negotiation of change, coping strategies, the influence of life course factors and the relationship of gender. These themes will form the basis for examination in the remaining empirical chapters but firstly, attention is focused on the way in which the women adjusted to their new student teacher status during school experience placements.

NOTES

(1) This is not to imply that Lacey did not recognise the significance of biography and life history in theories of socialization - he did. However,his thesis did not explicitly set out to explore the life history or life course themes upon the process of socialization.

(2) The details given on the induction form formed the basis for placing the first years into the seminar groups in which they would be taught for the rest of the term. Considerable lengths were taken to ensure that mature students would be taught in the same group, or at the same time, as their travelling companions. One half of the year group began lectures at 9am and the other at one 1pm. Students were asked to indicate which time they preferred to start so that the depositing and collecting of children from school would not be unduly compromised by the college timetable. The construction of these groupings was a logistically complex exercise and was the main reason for delaying the taught programmes until the latter part of the week.

(3) Fresher's Fayre, in common with most higher education institutions at the beginning of the academic year, is a publicity exhibition of all the social, sporting and recreational clubs and societies which are available for students t o join.

(4) The funding body for polytechnics and colleges at this time was called the Polytechnics, Colleges and Funding Corporation. The funding formula for all PCFC Institutions was based on an agreed Student Target Number for each institution. The STN was related to the previous year's student population. Institutions who exceeded their STN were allowed to bid for extra funding. In crude terms, the consequence of this principle was to give more cash to those institutions who exceeded their STNs. Several institutions, including, Riverdale College, felt under considerable pressure to fall in line with the prevailing funding forumula. The result was dramatically increased student numbers with inadequate, commensurate resources to meet the increased academic and administative work load.

(5) In order to preserve anonymity and confidentiality, all names of people and places used throughout the thesis are pseudonyms.

(6) The first 'proper' teaching session was perceived by the mature women students to be that which signalled the beginning of the formal course of teacher training. The notion of 'proper' was signalled by the presence of programme booklets which indicated the curriculum to be taught, book lists and assignment details.

(7) The Primary Curriculum programme was one of three main 1st year B.Ed programmes. It formed the core programme for First Years and the greatest amount of time was given to it. Primary Curriculum tutors held a pastoral as well as teaching responsibility for their groups and they were perceived by the students as an important source of contact and information. It was thus important that PC tutors and students were able to relate well to each other. Students considered themselves to be disadvantaged if they did not get on well with their PC tutor.

(8) Wednesday afternoons were free from timetabled commitments for all students.

CHAPTER 5

PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

A major part of the process of student teacher adaptation includes learning how to think and act as a trainee teacher in the classroom. Most of the women in the research group entered the B.Ed course with many years' experience of working with children in schools. With the exception of the youngest member of the group, all the women were mothers. In addition, many of them had been involved in a range of children's activities outside school which included youth work, dance classes rugby coaching, music teaching and most of the uniformed organisations such as cubs and brownies. From this, it might reasonably have been assumed that the school experience placements would present few difficulties for the women and that the process of adaptation to the role of student teacher would be relatively unproblematic. During the first interviews several women had signalled concerns about their ability to cope with the academic demands of the course but almost all of them exhibited high levels of confidence and enthusiasm about their potential performance in the classroom. The purpose of the chapter is to examine this assumption with an analysis of the available data on this aspect of their first year. The themes introduced in the previous chapter are taken up again for their

potential to offer insights and understanding about what actually happens when women with substantial experience of children enter the classroom as neophyte teachers. Central to this examination is a discussion of the way in which the women adjusted to schools in what was sometimes, a fraught and contradictory experience.

The Context

The pattern of school experience in the first year offered students twenty days of placements in two schools which are phased over the year in short bursts of two and three days at a time. This culminates in the Summer term in a week's block of formally assessed teaching experience in which students are expected to take responsibility for planning a programme of work on an agreed topic for a small group of children. In the Autumn term students work with children who are not in their preferred age group and in the Spring and Summer terms students are placed in a different school with children of their intended age phase.[1] It is at this school where the one-week block (referred to by the institution as the 'miniblock') of teaching experience will take place. At this point of their training students have to demonstrate that they can relate to children and staff as well as plan and manage a week's scheme of work with a group of approximately six children. Some limited whole class contact is expected which might, for example, include the reading of a story or taking the register (see appendix 4).

At the end of the miniblock, students are formally assessed on a pass/fail basis. During earlier school placements students were expected to practice the skills of observation, work with children under the direction of the classteacher and carry out several college-based prescribed activities (see appendix 4).

Because the school placements were sporadically located throughout the year for relatively short periods of time, I have gathered all the school experience data together so that a clearer picture can be gained of developing student teacher adaptation. The data on this issue has therefore been extracted from the second, third and fourth interviews (see appendix 2). Given that most of the women had worked in the classroom in a paid or unpaid capacity, I encouraged them to give me reflexive accounts of the changes they thought they were making between one role and another. For example, I wanted to know how far their previous classroom experience inhibited or enabled them to make the transition from the role of 'mother helper'/classroom assistant to that of student teacher. Was the transition a smooth, uneven or step-by-step process? How far did the mature women's biography and life history influence the processes of change in their progressive socialization as a student teacher. I was hopeful that the interconnections between their life experiences as mothers and classroom helpers with their subjective accounts of student teacher

adaptation would yield some useful insights about the processes of change and how they were experienced by the women.

Ball's (1972) concept of the situated and substantial identity and the work of Nias (1989) on 'self referentialism' in her study of primary teachers related very closely to what I was trying to understand about *how* change occurred in the women. Their studies also gave direction and an anchoring point from which to analyse shifts in self perception from noviciate to trainee teacher status. The analysis draws too upon Lacey's notion of social strategy which provides the link between socialization and social change. This concept is premissed on a view of the individual as one who 'is at the intersection of biography and the social change (and who) has some freedom to manipulate and change the situation while being constrained to adjust to it' (1977, p.95). In their development as teachers Lacey's P.G.C.E. students were able to produce change both 'through the creation of new strategies and by making choices within existing options' (p.127). Lacey defines three options or modes of adaption: 'internalised adjustment' where individuals accept the institution's norms; 'strategic redefinition' where the individual is in conflict with the institution and who seeks to bring about change and 'strategic compliance' where individuals protect themselves from institutional pressures by going along with the authority figure's definition of the situation whilst privately holding reservations about it

(1977, pp.72 &127). A key factor in Lacey's theory of socialisation is the ability of the performer to pick up the essential and important cues which will bring about an accurate reading of the situation in the first place. An inability to pick up the appropriate cues within a given situation would be likely to result in unsuccessful selection and employment of strategies thereby creating a fracture in the process of adaptation. For Lacey, socialisation is a complex, dynamic and interactive process in which the individual is able to make choices about which strategies s/he will employ to adapt to the pressures of an institution or a given situation. However, choice and use of strategy is problematic and definitions of a given situation will be differentially experienced according to whether an individual is 'cue-deaf, or a cue-seeker' (Miller & Partlett, 1974, pp.90-91).

The work of Ball (1972) on identity and the studies of teaching by Lacey (1977) will be drawn upon extensively throughout this chapter to help explain how student teacher socialization occurred.

Reactions to school experience

In the process of recalling their first placement, it was often described as, 'the best moment of the course so far.' The women's responses were charged with energy and animated intensity as they recounted the work they had done with the children and how they had related to the class teacher and the school as a whole. This early

experience of the classroom served to confirm and justify the struggle many of them had been through to get on the course in the first place. Barbara Melling's ardent response to her first school experience was typical of several women in the group:

> BM I loved it in school. I really feel that's for me, you know. I was saying to my husband last night, I think I knew when I came to college, I knew exactly what my goals were what I wanted and I don't think I'm going to change my mind. I just feel so relaxed. I feel yes, I belong here. I feel I should be doing this so I've just got to work hard to get there but it'll be worth it.

The feeling of 'belonging' as opposed to being 'outside' was referred to by Pat Grade (chapter 4, p.192) as an important indicator of early adjustment to the academic demands of the course. A perception that they were accepted and at ease with themselves in school was one of the signs which the women used to justify their presence on the course. Linda Vince, had spent several years working voluntarily in a primary school, perceived that her experience as a mother facilitated the ease with which she related to the headteacher. The way in which student and classteacher related to each other at the beginning of the school experience often played a significant role in the student's attitude to the school experience and whether or not they enjoyed it:

> LV The headteacher had all the time in the world for us. She told me all about the school and all about her family. It was just two women talking together really. She made us feel very, very

> comfortable. They went out of their way to be helpful to us. She said she was so thrilled to have us. I came away thinking, this is a dream school with everything working that she's trying to get working. I was very happy with the young age group even though its not my preferred age group - but I was so tired!

The continuity between Linda's life history with that of the headteacher was an example of gendered experience working to unite their interests which worked unequivocally in Linda's favour throughout the school experience.

On occasions, absorption in classroom activitites helped to ameliorate the effects of family crises. Ruth Barker had suffered two bereavements in close succession; first her mother-in-law and then her father. Both these deaths caused a series of painful and distressing family repurcussions of which she bore the brunt of the burden. Whilst these events weighed heavily upon her at home and in college, the school experience provided a welcome release from family pressures and temporarily succeeded in raising her spirits:

> RB I suppose the best thing was the school experience. I'm unsure about which age group I want to teach. I actually missed one day because of the funeral but - beautiful school, beautifully laid out. The general atmosphere was one of complete.....sort of harmony. I felt that it was a very 'together' school. The children called the teachers by their christian names and the teachers did actually earn their respect that they had with those children. The children seemed to be genuinely interested in me and in what their teachers were doing and there was certainly no lack of respect. I came away feeling wonderful, I like it.

Each of these extracts shows how closely the women's life history related to their definition of the situation in school. A key factor in this relationship is the way in which the women feel they are received by school personnel, particularly the classteacher, with whom they have the greatest contact. Not all the mature students were warmly welcomed, and in some cases, their maturity and previous experience in school was not seen as an advantage. For some women there was a distinct mismatch between the satisfaction and enjoyment of their previous work in schools and course placements. Several women having eagerly anticipated the school placement, found their new role as student teachers, restrictive and frustrating. Carole Payne, for example, already had considerable teaching and organisational experience in the Red Cross. This work brought her into regular contact with schools and she was confident about her ability to communicate successfully with them. She was both surprised and disappointed with the marginality of her role in the classroom and described herself as feeling like 'a spare part:'

CP The one thing that's surprised me.....the one thing that I don't enjoy is the teaching practice and its shocked me to the core beause I love being with the children which is why I wanted to teach. But the jobs that I've done with the children up till now....I always felt I could do more. I think I go in and I feel very much on the fringe and I can't be myself and I know I can't teach yet but I feel I know the children so that I feel....I just can't explain it. I just come away thinking I just can't wait till I'm in

my own position.
.... I do feel a spare part and you have to wait to be asked to do something and I think we intimidate the teachers more than they intimidate us, perhaps. The mature students particularly because they know that we're there to observe them and that must be awful. So I'm aware of that. I just think I would get on with the children in my own way and I'd like to find out what that way is, really. I feel that I won't ever learn what my style is until I teach. I find it very tedious, the "Could you work with this group?" I don't know what the children are capable of and all I do is supervise them which is boring.

Several members of the group reported that they felt superfluous in the classroom and this was frequently expressed as 'feeling like a spare part.' This perception was experienced by about a third of the group as unwelcome and anomic largely because their earlier work had been so deeply satisfying by comparison. They had gained a measure of respect in the schools in which they worked and were often treated as though they were members of the teaching staff. Whilst they may not have been accorded the same status as teachers they often undertook similar responsibilities like putting up displays and supervising the class in the teacher's absence. One or two had worked very closely with Year 2 classteachers in conducting the first round of statutory tests in 1991 at Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum. Indeed the work of these women was often so highly valued that it was the teachers and Heads with whom they worked who had encouraged them to train as teachers in the first place. To find instead that they were constrained by their student teacher status and in what they were allowed to do in

the classroom, caused them immense frustration and disappointment. This feeling is encapsulated by Carole Payne in the above extract when she admits to being 'shocked to the core.' She had anticipated the same rewards and enjoyment that she had experienced in her previous work with school children but instead felt marginalised and on the receiving end of 'tedious' group supervision. These contradictory reactions to school experience caused the women considerable conflict and role strain (cf Woodley, 1987). They cannot and do not want to revert to their previous role as parent helpers or classroom assistants but find their new role as student teachers ambiguous and tenuous. This is compounded by an awareness on the part of the women that the classteacher may be uneasy about the prospect of working with a student who has considerable classroom and life experience. As Carole Payne remarked in the above transcript, 'I think we intimidate the teachers more than they intimidate us perhaps.' So whilst students like Carole are keen to take on more responsibility and use the skills they have already acquired, they are constrained from so doing in case they are perceived by the classteachers as threatening, especially when they are acting as observers. Related to this was the need to be wary of 'overstepping the mark', and encroaching upon her/his domain of power and control, thus risking further problems in the delicate business of negotiating a working relationship with the classteacher. The

experience of role strain was strongly evident in Gail Prince's account of school experience.. She too finds difficulty in adjusting to her new role as student teacher added to which is the further complication of being known by the children in her placement class as her daughter's mother because her daughter attends the same dancing class as some of the girls in her class. Thus the children already know her as a mother and this, she feels, renders her status problematic and makes it difficult for her to establish an authority position in the class:

GP I find school experience peculiar actually.....the school we're in this time is in a very middle class area and I know quite a few of the girls from my daughter's dance class so that in itself is a bit difficult because I'm Anna's mummy! So that made me feel a little bit edgy. The teacher's super. She's very quietly spoken and she gets on very well with the children and I feel almost as if I'm a spare part. I like to feel that I'm actually doing something. The teacher is doing what she is supposed to be doing, giving me little groups for little things. But when you come back to college after school experience and you get people saying, "Oh, I'm doing this, I'm doing that." And you t h i n k, goodness me, nobody's asked me to do that, you know. Now I mean, essay marks and things, you know if people start saying, "I've got this and I've got that," that doesn't throw me at all. But with school experience when people start saying, "I've been asked to run the entire ship," or whatever, you start thinking well, why haven't I been asked to do this? And I really went home sort of feeling miserable and my husband said, "Don't be silly. When you were working at school the teacher was quite happy to leave you with her entire class while she went and did something." Its that really, its having been there and then almost going back.

Gail Prince's account of school experience is a clear example of how the interconnection of previous work experience, motherhood and the

student teacher role can impinge upon the situation in a way which rendered her current role in school as problematic. On the face of it, her experience of motherhood combined with her previous employment as a school secretary and classroom assistant, should have been a distinct advantage in her developing student teacher role and she had fully assumed it would be. Instead, the constraints of the social situation in which she finds herself place severe limits on her ability to use her experience to help her gain credibility or status in the classroom. The fact that some of the children in the class already know her as her daughter's mother is perceived by her as a distinct disadvantage inasmuch as it reduces and blurs her fragile student teacher status. It is not surprising, therefore, that she feels 'edgy' and insecure about her student teacher status. Paradoxically, her substantial experience of school administration and classroom responsibility intensified her feelings of marginality and lack of status in the classroom - a perception which she articulated as 'having been there and almost going back.' Her anxiety about her minimal role in the classroom was compounded when she returned to college and heard other students talking about how much responsibility they had been given in school. This had the effect of making her feel that there was something intrinsically wrong with her classroom performance which had led to her comparative under use as a student.

One of the consequences of the conflict and anxiety about her student teacher status which this experience had caused Gail, was the diversion of her energies to academic work as a source of satisfaction and enjoyment. This was an outcome that she and a group of other mature students had not anticipated.

Whilst the relationship between the classteacher and the student is a significant factor in impeding or enhancing the progress of student teacher socialization, an equally important influence was the 'School Based Activities booklet' and School Experience Policy Statement which was given to students and placement schools (see appendix 4). This document contains very specific and prescriptive instructions about the institution's expectations of the way in which students should be used and the kind of involvement they should have with children. An early statement makes a distinction between 'direct' and 'caught' teaching experience in which students were to be seen as 'providing another pair of hands' (see p.350, appendix 4). It is likely that this statement signalled a very clear message to schools about the way in which first year students were to be used. Classteachers who leaned towards a literal interpretation of this statement could be forgiven for using beginning student teachers much as they might have done with parent helpers. The placement periods were brief, giving hard pressed teachers very little time to learn about their students' capabilities or to

build a relationship with them. In this context it becomes possible to understand how mature students like Gail could be relegated to a marginal and low status, helper role in the classroom. From the teachers' perspective, they were abiding by the college's prescriptions; from the women's perspective they felt 'outsiders' in a context where they felt they had already earned membership and rite of passage. For the younger student, this gradualist approach to teaching experience may well have been an appropriate way of helping to build up confidence in a series of small steps towards greater independence and responsibilty. For students like Gail Prince and Carole Payne, the pace of this approach is perceived by them to be too slow and undemanding. It did not allow them to demonstrate their confidence or experience and it constrained their adaptation to the student teacher role. Carole Payne described the experience as 'tedious' and Gail Prince, felt that 'giving me little groups for little things,' was demeaning and regressive. In both cases they experienced role strain and status anxiety, the outcome of which was to find greater satisfaction in their college studies.

School Strategies and Cue Consciousness

Some students found that their past work experience with different groups of people, (for example, working in a residential home for the elderly, children's homes, Social Service departments and nursing) was especially helpful in alerting them to the difficulties that teachers might

face in having to work alongside a mature student who was of a similar age or older than themselves. They were particularly conscious of the discomfort that their presence might create for the teacher when they were required to observe them. This point has already been referred to by Carole Payne (p.216) along with several other members of the group. Sensitivity to this issue however, sometimes acted as another constraint on developing student teacher adaptation. For example, some women temporarily reverted to a parent helper role and played a more passive and deferential role than they might otherwise have preferred. This was a conscious and deliberate strategy on their part designed to help them build a relationship with the classteacher which gradually won their confidence. To have 'muscled in' too soon might have been viewed by the teachers as 'pushy' and threatening behaviour. In short, this strategy was used in the hope of achieving longer term gains at the expense of short term loss. The following extracts show how two women used this strategy in a successful bid to win the trust of their classteachers without risking an early fracture in the delicate process of negotiating a satisfactory working relationship. Beth Wells describes the dilemmas this created for her and the classteacher and how she succeeded in overcoming them through a series of adaptations the outcome of which was a successfully negotiated relationship which worked for both parties:

BW my teacher...um..she was a bit perturbed by my being there and it took her a long time to sort of have a bit of confidence in me. It was difficult and I just feel that she hadn't a lot of confidence herself and she found it difficult having me there and she liked to sort of send me out of the room with a group which was fine but I could feel that she...um...she found it difficult and like at breaktimes, she would sort of disappear.....
So my teacher, I felt was difficult but by the end of the school experience we had a very good friendship. We'd both got children the same age and I think that's what she found difficult... that we were a similar age and that we had children the same age. By the end of the time we were able to compare notes. She was able to give me lots and lots of information. She was able to say, "Well this lesson didn't go very well, did it?"

DD It sounds as though you did a lot of adapting on your part?

BW I think I did, really. But I do feel that I get on very well with most people and I don't sort of jump in. I do sort of study people and try and see how...you know, I do feel that that's a skill I gained through working with older people and younger people and different sorts of people and having to adapt to people.

Christine Kift shows how she used the skills acquired in past work experience to avoid the tensions which initially occurred between Beth Wells and her classteacher. Christine made a conscious decision at the outset of her school placement to reduce the visibility of her presence by physically placing herself at the far side of the classroom, away from the classteacher where she got involved with a group of children. The early employment of this strategy eased the potential strain to the classteacher of having a mature student sitting within her field of vision and taking notes. The adoption of this strategy also avoided the need for

the initial passive and deferential posturing which Beth felt she had to adopt in order to make her classteacher feel more confident and comfortable with her. I asked Christine if she, like some mature students had found the school experience restrictive and disappointing:

CK Oh no. Perhaps I just muscle in too much but I have plenty to do. I have a great time. I've found being a mature student a tremendous advantage because I'm able to communicate with the teachers so much better,... well I think perhaps I do.

DD Some mature students have found the teachers backing off them a bit, perhaps because they are a bit threatened by them?

CK Yes, I think certainly. I try not to hang around as if I'm watching every move they make. I try to take myself to the other side of the classroom.

The strategy used by Beth Wells, can be identified as 'strategic negotiation' and that used by Christine Kift as 'strategic distancing'. Both strategies succeeded in helping the women adjust to their school placement.

The first year school experience is thus differentially experienced by members of the research group. For some it acted as a confirmation of their wish to teach and was perceived as an enjoyable and deeply satisfying experience. Their age, work and life experience was perceived positively by the school and served to facilitate their relationship with the classteacher. For others it was a more problematic experience where, paradoxically, their respective age, work

and life experience created unexpected and unwelcome difficulties. One group of students in this category experienced considerable role strain and status anxiety resulting in feelings of disequilibrium and disappointment. The second group faced similar contradictory experiences with regard to the way in which their maturity, life and work experience was perceived by the classteacher. Their response to the situation is to find a way of negotiating a relationship by making various adaptations on their part, the outcome of which was to secure a successful student/teacher relationship.

The particular stategies selected by the women in response to their first encounters as student teachers are the result of a complex interaction of factors which included biography, work history and their interpretation of the situation. The interrelationship of these factors constrained both positively and negatively the strategies they adopted. In the case of the first three women discussed there was a congruence between their needs and expectations and those of the school. The experiences they brought to the school, both past and present were received positively. The consequence for Linda Vince, in particular, was that she was able to make an easy and swift adjustment to the school, the classteacher and the student teacher role. The social strategy used here, 'strategic acceptance', closely resembled Lacey's 'internalised adjustment' in which the 'individual complies with the constraints and

believes the situation is for the best.' (1977, p. 72). The way in which the social setting, life and previous work experience interconnected, strongly influenced the women's adoption of the strategy to adjust quickly to the school, the constraints of the first year school experience requirements and the student role.

In the case of Carole Payne and Gail Prince who found themselves situated in an uneasy limbo between the parent helper role and that of student teacher, the outcome was a perception of anomie characterised by role strain and status anxiety. A further contribution which impeded student teacher adaptation was the schools' close adherence to the first year school experience instructions which had the effect of making both women feel marginalised and restricted to classroom activities which they perceived to be low status, undemanding and regressive of their development as student teachers. The contradictions and paradoxes experienced by Carole and Gail in this situation arose from the way in which the interrelationship of their age, life and work experience interacted with the social setting. What worked for the three previous women worked against Carole and Gail. The social strategy used by these women was to relocate their energies into academic study and can thus be called 'strategic relocation of energy and interest.' In so doing they regained some of the satisfaction and challenge which they had not been able to achieve in school. Switching

their attention to academic study also provided them with a clearly defined student role which had not been the case in school.

The social strategies used by Beth Wells and Christine Kift make use of the skills and sensibilities acquired in their previous employment to help them achieve an accurate 'reading' of the classroom situation which was successful in both anticipating and dealing with potential difficulties in the relationship between themselves and their respective classteachers. Once more, potential difficulties were both created and resolved by their respective age and life history. Christine Kift adopted a strategy which pre-empted the potential tensions which might have occurred between herself and the classteacher by decreasing her visibilty in the classroom and physically removing herself as far as she could from the teacher's immediate field of vision. Again, her work history had sensitised her to the teacher's needs and the pressures she might be experiencing in a situation of student surveillance. This strategy which was called, 'strategic distancing' succeeded in gaining the trust of the teacher at an early point in the school placement as well as providing her with a clearly defined sense that she was making progress in adjusting to the student role.

Lacey (1977) wrote that the ability to carry out a strategy successfully was dependent on the individual's interpretation of the situation and their ability to read the cues accurately. Miller and

Partlett (1974) made a helpful distinction between groups of people who were 'cue seekers' and 'cue conscious' and those who were 'cue unconscious' and 'cue-deaf'(pp.90-91). Both Beth and Christine were active cue seekers who were highly cue-conscious.

What has been discussed above is but one part of a much longer process. As the mature students move through the course it is likely that the processes of socialisation will change and shift as a result of the particular adaptations which have already taken place and the demands of the training programme at the time. Socialisation is thus viewed as a continuous, dynamic and constantly changing process which the women were able to shape and manipulate to suit their purposes according to the needs and circumstances of the time. Adaptation was also influenced by the constraints of the course and the social setting in which they were placed. The strategies they will come to use in subsequent parts of the course will be affected by the experience of earlier strategies and the extent to which they have hindered or helped their student teacher adjustment. School strategies are therefore context-specific and can only be understood by a detailed reading of the situation and the way in which biography and life history interacted with it at the time. Important too, was the interaction between significant school personnel and the mature women.

The choice and use of strategies in the women's early adaptation

was not fixed or static but dependent on the context at a particular point in time. In another social setting, at a later point in their socialisation, the interrelationship of factors already discussed might well combine to bring about a markedly different set of social strategies.

Student Teacher Identity

Changes in the processes of adaptation also concern changes in self-image or identity. The women came to the B.Ed course with 'substantial' identities (Ball, 1972) as mothers and wives. Part of their early student socialization necessitated a belief in themselves and in their actions as student teachers. Believing in themselves as student teachers is another way of saying that they have acquired a student teacher identity. Part of the purpose of this chapter is to chart the processes by which this identity began to be constructed in the women.

Within the theoretical formulations of symbolic interactionism Cooley (1902) argued that through our interactions with other people we learn to see ourselves as we think others see us. By attaching symbolic meanings to people's behaviour we learn to take other people's perspectives which, in turn, gives us a wider view of ourselves. Mead (1934) later expanded upon this idea, claiming that "the 'I' (ego) can observe, be aware of and think about 'me' (alter)." (Cited in Nias, 1989, p. 20). In other words, we experience ourselves in the same way that we experience other people. The 'self' is therefore fundamentally

social. Mead (1934) argued that 'selves can only exist in definite relationships with other selves.' (p. 164). I wanted to see whether this interaction between the 'I' and the 'me' could be articulated and made explicit in relation to perceived changes in identity among the women in the study.

The data used to examine this aspect of the study was mainly drawn from final interviews after the students had completed their Summer term 'miniblock' in which they were assessed on a pass/fail basis. I wanted to investigate whether the women were aware of the possible transitions which had taken place from their previous roles in the classroom as paid and unpaid helpers towards a changed identity of themselves as student teachers. Could they articulate the changes that had taken place and if so, could they specify what factors accounted for the changes? Who had succeeded in making a successful transition and who had not and why?

In most cases the women were able to offer reflexive and detailed accounts of the shifts they felt they had made in their progress towards a student teacher identity. In some cases, the transition from one classroom identity to another was partial and with others, it was like quicksilver, fleeting and momentary. These women were experiencing glimpses of the changes that were taking place within themselves but the student teacher role had not yet hardened into a firm, or substantial

identity. The business of relinquishing their former identity of themselves as parent helpers in order to incorporate a student teacher identity was not straightforward. The transition involved the risk of losing the security and comfort of a known and certain role for another which is less certain and more problematic. Pat Grade described how she constantly moved between the roles of parent helper and student teacher without feeling securely placed in either:

PG I mean you go in and you're pretty much a dead fish,(sic) sort of thing. You're not one thing or another. You're not a parent helper and I'm actually getting less responsibility than a parent helper.

DD So do you not feel that you're a trainee teacher yet?

PG Its hard to say. I've been referred to as a trainee teacher and I've been referred to as a student. I feel that puts me down a lot. When I'm referred to as a trainee teacher, that's a lot better; it gives me a definition of the idea. But no, I still don't feel like a trainee teacher. I still feel like a parent. The teacher I'm working under is a lot younger than me and she only qualified two years ago and at times she keeps saying, "What do you think?" And I can't shift my role fast enough, do you know what I mean? I can't stand back and I can't be in it at the same time, I've got to be one thing or another.

Pat's reflexive and graphic account made explicit the chimeric sense in which she felt, at one and the same time, a parent helper, student and trainee teacher. She still felt like a parent helper although her classteacher treated her as though she was a student teacher. There was a gap between the teacher's perception of her role and that which Pat

had of herself. The classteacher's perception had jumped ahead of Pat's ability to see herself as a student teacher. The 'I' had not yet grasped the new 'me' which is arguably what Pat means when she says, "I can't shift my role fast enough ..... I can't stand back and I can't be in it at the same time."

The acquistion of student teacher identity is dependant on a range of factors including the passage of time, self knowledge, feedback from significant others and newly acquired skills and abilities. Knowing if and when this transition had taken place required a degree of self consciousness and considerable reflexivity. The precise point at which change takes place between the 'I' and the 'me' is often elusive and difficult to define. As Mead has said, "The 'I' of this moment is present in the "me" of the next moment ..... I cannot turn round quick enough to catch myself." (Mead 1934, p. 174). I was, however, struck by the extent to which the women in the study were able to articulate the changes that were taking place in themselves and what factors accounted for them At the end of the miniblock, Pat was still unsure about whether she had moved from her former role as a parent helper to that of student teacher but she was clear that was making progress and was able to say what accounted for it:

PG ... there's been a great shift in my thinking. The trouble is that when you go into school you're at um..... disequilibrium in

yourself. You think to yourself, oh I'll just do that and that's what a parent helper would do and there is already a parent helper doing it... and you think, oh where do I fit in now? It's sort of not one thing or another really. So I really had to stand and take my cues from the teacher. I'd have to wait to be included because I wasn't really certain where to put myself.

DD How did you feel as the week progressed? Did you become clearer about your role?

PG Yes. As the week went on I became more confident in myself. I mean as a parent helper, you have no control over anything, really, but as a trainee teacher you do have control. The teacher expects, if she goes out of the room to do something, that you won't let them climb all over the place. So there's a shift in power, really.

The progress which Pat had made by the end of the week's placement can be explained partly by the shifts she had made in her own thinking and partly by the expectations the teacher had of her to perform as a trainee teacher. Adapting to the student teacher role required a conscious decision to think herself into a new state of being. Pat had to think and act like a trainee teacher in ways which were markedly different from that of a parent helper. This process was facilitated if the teacher placed expectations and demands upon the student which the student herself perceived to be different from those normally placed upon parent helpers. An important point of progress for Pat was the teacher's expectation of her to be able to keep control while she was out of the classroom. She was charged with a responsibility which forced her to move away from the parent role in order to take up a more

assertive and controlling role which she perceived as 'a shift in power.' I later asked what factors had helped her to feel that she was moving in the direction of believing in herself as a student teacher:

PG Um..... when they say to you, "What do you think we should do? Or being included in teacher's meetings, planning meetings and, "Have you got any ideas on that?" And you think, right yes, what I've got to say is important, you know. And they will actually act on it.

The ways in which the classteacher interacted with the women and the kind of responsibilities they gave to them were of central importance in giving the students a belief in themselves as student teachers. Asking the students for their opinions and ideas made them feel they had a contribution to make and served to reinforce their status as student teachers. Pat felt that she still had some way to go before she could own to having a student teacher identity which now replaced the parent helper role ,but she had made discernible progress and the classteacher had played an important part in the process as patients had played in making student physicians feel like doctors (cf Becker et al., 1961).

Not all the mature students benefitted from this kind of interaction from their classteachers and some students felt that teachers did not make clear distinctions between themelves and parent helpers. Two women who believed they had made some progress towards a student teacher identity in their first school, felt that they had regressed during

the miniblock because of the way their respective classteachers had used them. Both Lucy Patron and Marilyn Smith had similar experiences. I asked Lucy if she felt she had made the transition from her former role as mother helper to that of student teacher:

> LP I think in the first school that I went to, straight away I felt like that because of the way the teacher approached me. She introduced me as a teacher and the children just automatically thought I was another teacher, and that helped a lot. The whole attitude of the school was good, but at this school, I've just been ..... a lot of the time I felt like a Mum because I wasn't asked to do things with the children. I was just milling round and this teacher wasn't so forthcoming so I felt at times, just like a spare part.

I asked the same question of Marilyn Smith:

> MS I don't know that there was such a shift quite honestly. In the class that I was in she had a mother helper come in every day and because of that, although I was a little bit more than a helper, I wasn't quite sure of my position in the class. I did feel a little bit unsure about whether I was a helper or a trainee teacher because in some ways I was treated like a mother helper and the next minute she expected me to be a trainee teacher.

Both Lucy and Marilyn ended their first full week of experience in school still feeling a considerable degree of ambiguity about their identity as student teachers. For both of these women the transition to a belief in themselves as student teachers had been impeded by the failure of their classteachers to make a clear distinction between them and parent helpers. At this early point in their training classteachers, act as significant others for the students and the perception of themselves

communicated by the teachers was central to the way in which they judged their adjustment to the student teacher role at the end of the year.

Another important factor in the process of identity transition was the preparedness of the mature students to relinquish the mother helper role. A small number of students initially resisted the student teacher role for the relative safety of the mother helper role. Compared to students who were clear that they had made a definite shift by the end of the week, they appeared less confident and more tentative about perceived changes in their identity. Brenda Corless, for example, was aware that she still had some way to go before she could believe in herself as a student teacher even though the classteacher had been very helpful to her in terms of treating her as one:

> BC I still think I've got another step to go, to be quite honest. I've always, like you say, been a helper and always been behind someone else..... so to take that step out, I felt very conscious of that. About Thursday or Friday, I thought, oh yes, I can handle this. They're taking notice of me. (they're - children) ...but I don't think I've got there yet.

Beryl King also found the change from one role to another difficult.

Like Brenda, she was initially reticent about moving into a role which placed the onus of responsibility for planning lessons and managing children, upon her. In their previous role as parent helpers they had been been told what to do and depended entirely upon the classteacher

for guidance and direction. In their new role as student teachers they were accountable for their own lesson planning, rationale and management. For Brenda and Beryl this was a big step to take which involved potential failure and loss of face with both the children and the classteacher. Neither wanted to fail at this early point so they clung to the security of the mother helper role until the latter part of the week when they felt they had gained more confidence. Beryl King admitted that she was not quite ready to take the responsibility which was required of a student teacher:

BK I found it quite difficult to make the change actually. Having to actually plan things and think, why am I doing it, rather than just going in and being told which was virtually what I'd been doing up until lthis week. I did find that quite difficult.

There would seem to be two indispensible conditions for progress to occur in the transition towards a student teacher identity: the first require the woman's preparedness to shed the mother helper role and the second required the willingness of the classteacher to communicate to the student a clear and unambiguous view of themselves as trainee teachers as well as give them classroom tasks which were commensurate with the status of a student teacher. This included taking the students into their confidence about children's needs and problems; referring to them as teachers rather than students in the children's presence; making

a clear distinction between them and parent helpers and inviting students to contribute ideas to meetings and future lesson planning.

Another tangible sign which the women counted as progress towards student teacher adaptation concerned the behaviour of other classroom personnel towards them. This applied particularly to parent helpers and classroom assistants or auxiliary helpers. The way in which lower status classroom personnel behaved towards them was seen as an important reference point for their developing student teacher identity. Students who were confident that they had begun to acquire a student teacher identity often referred to the way in which parent helpers treated them. If parent helpers deferred to them in the process of classroom interaction and classteachers manifested differential treatment of parent helper in ways which erred in the women's favour, this was used as a kind of 'marker' by them which indicated that they had succeeded in acquiring student teacher status.

Ann Major, a student who was confident that she had made the transition from mother helper to student teacher, pinpointed the way in which she had dealt with an infant child's challenge to her status as a 'teacher' as a tangible sign that she had acquired a student teacher identity:

AM I think it particularly happened in that week block and it happened particularly in one of the writing sessions... and

> one of the children, quite a bright child, writes his name with a capital letter at the end of his surname and I said, "You don't do that." And he said, "My Mum does it that way", and I said, "But you're at school now and we do it the right way at school." And he said, "But my teachers let me," and I said, "But I'm you're teacher this week and I'm not going to let you because I want it done properly." And he did, and he did it correctly the whole week, and I think if there was a moment, then that was it.

The child's challenge of her request to write his name correctly provided Ann with an important test of her belief in herself as a trainee teacher. She was not de-railed by the child's reluctance to do what she requested and when he eventually complied, it served to confirm her student teacher identity.

Beth Wells also felt confident that she had succeeded in making the transition from parent helper to student teacher. The important features for her were the sense she had of being treated as a professional by the Headteacher, teaching staff and mother helpers:

> BW I do feel I've made the shift and I think its the way that we were treated at the school. We were treated very well and made to feel one of the staff, greeted by the Headmaster and sort of spoken to and treated very kindly by the deputy head and made to feel part of the school. Yes, I felt as if we had a professional position there. I felt that the mother helpers there, sort of looked to us as part of the profession and I did sort of warm to that.

Christine Kift was very explicit about the importance of the classteacher's potential to facilitate or inhibit student teacher adaptation She also made a distinction about the kind of work she was asked to

carry out with the children compared to that of parent helpers. For example, she perceived that involvement in the subject of science and technology was more 'intellectual' and of higher status than that of painting which was the activity normally allocated to parent helpers working in the same class. The use of parent helpers in this way as a kind of comparative reference point against which the women could gauge their progress in the process of adjustment to the student teacher role, was frequently mentioned. I asked Christine if the week-long school experience was the first point at which she felt she had made the transition to the student teacher role:

CK No....It had been building gradually. I think, thanks to the teachers I was with because I think its very much in the hands of the teacher whether you feel like a helper or whether you feel like a teacher. They can completely destroy you and make you into a helper if they want to. But they were very good. I was given responsiblity for the more sort of technical things...there were helpers in the classroom and while they'd be sort of standing watching the painting, I'd be having to do something a little bit more intellectual, perhaps, and yes, the children treated me like a teacher, not like one of the helpers. I don't know whether I've said this to you before that as a mature student, perhaps I'm luckier because I'm much the same age as some of the teachers I'm with..... so we communicate.....it came very naturally to chat and to compare things and I found they did take me into confidences about pupils and things very easily.... which makes you feel part of the staff.

Christine felt that the fact she was the same age as some of the teachers made it easier for communication to take place between them, the outcome of which was the sharing of confidences about individual pupils

in a way which enabled her to feel a part of the staff. In Christine's case, the particular interaction between herself and the teachers secured a very firm belief of herself as a student teacher. The favourable response of the teachers to her maturity and life experience greatly facilitated the transition she felt she had made to a student teacher identity.

Approximately half the women in the study felt that they had acquired a student teacher identity by the end of their first year teaching experience. Just under half felt that they were almost there or had another step to go and a small minority believed that they could not yet believe in themselves as student teachers and felt closer to a mother helper identity in the classroom. If the transitions which the women had made in the incorporation of this new identity could be plotted on Ball's 'situated/substantial identity' continuum, most of them would be at, or approaching, the 'substantial' end. However, it would be premature to believe that this was a stable perception. Doubtless they would continue to move back and forth along the continuum as their training progressed and as a result of differing interactions with education tutors, teachers, children and other classroom personnel. It would seem reasonable to assume that as the women increased in skill, knowledge and confidence over the years so the degree of fluctuation on the identity continuum would decrease and stablilise. However this can

only be inferred at this stage and would require a more detailed and lengthy investigation for a clearer picture to emerge. What is clear from the study about this aspect of their socialization is that both the women's and the classteachers' responses to the situation were important influences upon potential identity transitions. Equally important is the changing nature of the social relationship between the women, classteachers and children. Several extracts from the data on this issue show marked changes in teachers' responses to the women over time, even relatively brief periods of time.

Lacey's (1977) concept of social strategy and Ball's (1972) notion of situated and substantial identity have been used to examine some of the processes of student teacher adaptation within the context of first year school placements. Change was shown to take place through transitions in perceived identity and the choice and use of specific strategies to adjust to the demands of the school. Whilst the women had some freedom to shape and negotiate circumstances to their advantage, their choice of strategy was circumscribed by the constraints of the school and the prescriptions of the school experience. The processes of socialization which took place in school settings show a close interrelationship between biography, life history and the institutional constraints of the college and schools.

The next chapter develops further the analysis of identity and

strategies in order to examine the impact of the combined pressures of family and academic responsibility on the women's student teacher socialization.

NOTES

(1) B.Ed students at Riverdale College trained for one of two age phases: 3 - 8 years or 7 - 11 years. However, age specific training did not begin until the second year of the course.

CHAPTER 6

BEING A STUDENT

The mature women students are now in their second term and are fully immersed into student life. They have submitted their first essays and begun several new taught programmes. Towards the end of this term, preparations will start for the first year examinations and a week's school placement which will take place at the beginning of the Summer term. The initial struggles and hard won successes involved in becoming a student have been replaced by the daily reality of being a student and what this means for individuals and their families.

The greatest challenge for the women at this point of the year was to find ways of reconciling the accelerating pressures of academic work with family responsibilities without sacrificing one at the expense of the other. Being a student required a progressive and incremental series of adjustments to its role, its culture within the institution and the additional workload it generated. As was the case with school experience, a key factor in understanding and explaining student adaptation was through an examination of the social strategies which the women used to accommodate to the competing claims upon their lives. How did these changes take place and what were their effects upon the women and their families?

What was clear from the women's accounts was the dialectical interplay of the needs of self as student, mother and wife - as well as the needs of the family and institution, in the choice of strategies used. These strategies were also negotiated and constantly re-negotiated with the family throughout the year. A recurrent theme in this study has been an examination of strategic change in relation to life course, biographical, institutional and structural factors. This interrelationship has a firm history in studies of classrooms and teacher behaviour, see for example, (Pollard, 1982; Denscombe, 1985; Ball & Goodson, 1985: Woods, 1981 & 1990). Drawing upon this research interest I have used Pollard's concept of 'coping strategy' to examine the ways in which the women adapted to the student role and managed the twin pressures of college work and family responsibility. Pollard's concept draws upon Schutz's (1972) notion of 'interests-at-hand' which is premissed on the symbolic interactionist belief that the self is not a homogenous whole and that different parts of it are realised depending on coping needs, (Woods 1990). Pollard uses the concept of interests-at-hand to analyse these differing parts of self. 'In these, motivational relevance is governed by situational demands and interests which are 'juggled' depending on how priorities are perceived as classroom processes evolve,' (cited in Woods, 1990, p.122). The women frequently used the word, 'coping' to describe whether or not they were

managing to ‘keep on top of’ the range of demands on their time and energy. The term 'coping strategy' was also understood by the women students who had recently learned about Pollard's work in a core programme entitled, 'School and Society.' This theoretical orientation therefore fitted very well with my data and served the purpose of offering the multi-layered analysis I was seeking as well as being a well understood social category.

The following analysis of student adaptation includes an examination of the factors which brought change about and how this, in turn, related to the actual choice of strategies used. The issue of what "coping" meant and how it was defined by the women is also examined.

In their efforts to reduce conflict as well as satisfy the interests of self in the complex ebb and flow of classroom life, Pollard (1982) made the point that coping strategies are not simply formed as a result of individual teachers adapting to the external constraints of the classroom and societal demands. Coping strategies arise from the specific goals, purposes and interests of the individual within a cultural context. Central to his model of classroom coping strategies is the need for negotiation between teachers and pupils. Both parties have their own sets of interests which have to be understood and satisfied if overt conflict is to be avoided and a degree of harmony sustained in a context in which teachers must teach and children learn. Ultimately, the

survival of both teachers and pupils in living out their classroom lives together, depends upon the achievement of a satisfactory balance of both parties' interests. Successful negotiation and accommodation to these interests leads to what Pollard calls a 'working consensus', (1982, p.35). In this consensus interests are juggled depending on the specific situation in which teachers and pupils find themselves and over time such juggling becomes a regular pattern of classroom life to the extent that it becomes 'institutionalised in the form of coping strategies', (Pollard, 1982, p.35). For teachers, a crucial element in their coping springs from the desire to defend themselves from personal threat and in classrooms the aspects of self interest which are most likely to be threatened are defined by Pollard as self-image, work-load, health and stress, enjoyment, autonomy, order and instruction (1982, p.32). Depending on the individual biography of the teacher some aspects of these self-interests will have greater prominence than others and teachers will respond by using what Pollard calls 'strategic defensive adaptions' to protect themselves, (p.32). This leads Pollard (1985) to define coping strategies as 'a creative but semi-routinised and situational means of protecting the individual's self', (p.155).

With the possible exception of discussions which took place with peer students, the coping strategies of the mature women students are not played out in public arenas in which interactions between two or

more parties are part of a routinised and predictable pattern of daily life. They arise largely in the private domain of the home and within the self. They are therefore less visible and only available for scrutiny when specific requests are made for their articulation as was the case during the interviews with the women. Because they are recounted reflexively, rather than observed, the mature womens' coping strategies are of a more intersubjective and phenomenological kind than Pollard's classroom coping strategies. However, what the mature students have in common with teachers and pupils is a subjective definition of 'coping' (Pollard, 1982). Following Woods (1977), Pollard acknowledges that the concept of 'self' is central to his model of coping (1982,p.28). Drawing upon Mead's (1934) writings on symbolic interactionism, Pollard emphasises the importance of the dialectical interplay between the individual's subjective experience and the experience derived from interactions and relationships with others. This theoretical orientation will be explored by examining the processes of adaptation which the women underwent as they moved from the experience of 'becoming' to 'being' a student. Unravelling this process will reveal the issues which confronted the women as they struggled to make sense of and accommodate to this transition. This begins with an analysis of the women's subjective accounts of change.

The Subjective Experience of Being a Student

By the second term the women had received feedback on three essays which had largely confirmed them as credible students in the sense that they had now begun to believe that they were capable of sustaining academic work at Honours degree standard. Most for example, achieved marks of between 57% and 70% and above i.e. between the high 2:2 and First Class degree classification band.[1] The women invested this first academic feedback with considerable significance. Indeed, many of them regarded this point of their teacher training as a crossing of the Rubicon, the successful outcome of which signalled an important step forward in the direction of 'being' a student. Several weeks into the Spring term the mature women were beginning to feel the pace of the course quickening and the pressure of work mounting. Two new education programmes had been introduced: one called, Schools and Society and the other, Key Concepts. The former drew upon the discipline of sociology the latter, philosophy. Many of the mature women commented on the challenging nature of these programmes compared with the educational programmes studied in the previous term which had dealt with the developmental aspects of young children's learning. The material covered in these programmes was close to the womens' experience as mothers and in this sense they felt 'comfortable' with the issues. The concepts covered in the Spring

term programmes were at a greater distance from their lived experience and made demands upon them to think, argue and debate ideas using theoretical and empirical evidence to support their points of view. Whilst many of the women relished the intellectual challenge of these programmes, some found them difficult to grasp and saw little relevance in their application to teacher training. Thus the forthcoming essays and Summer term examinations on these areas caused some of the women considerable anxiety. This anxiety was prominent in the second term's interviews and was clearly evident in Brenda Corless's response to my question about how she was experiencing this term's demands in comparison with the first term:

> BC Its much harder than I thought it was going to be and I've certainly found this term harder than last term. I had a School and Society essay which I had to prepare for last week but I found the 'Indoctrination' essay for Key Concepts horrendous and really difficult. I've been working so hard on that. I've done it but I literally sat all day yesterday whenever I could, just doing it. (Brenda Corless)

Several women commented that the chief difficulty lay with the Key Concepts programme both in terms of understanding the concepts and relating them to the classroom. One of the problems appeared to centre on the particular core text [2] which they were required to use throughout the programme. Whilst the language of this book was intended for students new to philosophy, it included a number of

references to the ideas of classical as well as contemporary philosophers with which the students were required to be familiar if they were to make sense of the writer's arguments. I asked Linda Vince what was so difficult about the Key Concepts programme:

> LV Absolutely everything! The only thing I can gain from it is sorting out fine distinctions between a 'want' and a 'need', for example. I've found Key Concepts very, very difficult and I'm absolutely dreading the exams in it. I feel out of my depth in it. I understand what the tutor is saying in the lecture but its relating what he says to the book. I couldn't get on the same level as the book. The tutor gives you such a lot of examples of what he's saying and that really helps. Its the book I find confusing.

The mature students' recent preparatory experience on Access courses, A' level courses and Open University Foundation courses would seem to have prepared them well for the first term but for some, the content and approach of the programmes in the second term presented difficulties. Some women, however, responded enthusiastically to the cut and thrust of academic debate and enjoyed the demands placed upon them to think about familiar concepts in a new way. Carole Payne, for example, admitted to liking the philosophy but made the point that her understanding had been made easier by a tutor who explained the language of the book and by discussing the relevant chapters before the lecture with a group of friends:

CP I mean we may not understand what we're talking about in these subjects but they certainly make you think. Sociology is fine because we did that on the Access course so that prepared me quite nicely. The philosophy I quite like. I actually would prefer more discussion. Our tutor is very good actually. I think he explains what we should do and if I read the book beforehand which usually makes no sense to me, and then I listen to him and I think, yes, that's alright now. I can understand where he's coming from. The girls in our group, we often read and discuss what we've read between us because that helps sort things out in our minds. We use each other really, to help one another.

The use of friendship groups as a means of sharing thoughts and getting to grips with complex ideas and textbook language was frequently referred to by the women as a key strategy for coping with college work. Peer group support came to play an important role in helping the women survive the pressures of college work and was one of a range of coping strategies which the women used to manage the competing pressures of college work and family responsibilities.

Part of the experience of 'being' a student also involved finding ways of coping with the increasing pressure of college work whilst at the same time holding onto periods of quality time with their husbands, partners and children. The basic necessities of life such as cooking meals, doing the washing, ironing and shopping still had to be done, but in ever decreasing amounts of time as academic work encroached further into their private lives. How did the women experience these pressures and tensions and what were some of the consequences of an increasingly pressured life at home? One clear consequence was a loss

of time for personal recreation and an ever present feeling of fatigue. The way in which the women define this 'new' reality is clearly evident in the following two extracts:

CP ....I think I underestimated how demanding compared to the Access course it actually is. Whilst I was prepared for the hard work here and the essays and things, its all-consuming. It fills our whole lives really. There doesn't seem to be a moment, particularly this term when we can think about doing something else. (Carole Payne).

CK I have to say the worst aspect of being a full-time student, I mean its a stupid thing, but not being able to get outside. I love being outdoors and I am so tied down all the time and now the weather's getting better, I miss that. I suppose its the freedom I miss. The freedom to make a decision and say, right, today, I'm going to do this. Working to a timetable is hard. I do not relax. I do not have a day off. (Christine Kift).

The perception on the part of the women that being a student is 'all consuming', that 'it fills our whole lives really' and that 'I do not relax', was amply born out by the diaries which I asked them to keep for a ten-day period in the early part of the Spring term.

The Diaries

In order to find out what the lived reality of being a full-time B.Ed student was like from the time they woke up in the morning until the moment they went to bed, I asked them to record every domestic, family and college related activity that occurred during the day. The diaries provided another source of evidence about the impact of

academic demands upon their family lives which may not, otherwise have surfaced in the interviews. The following extracts from Carole Payne's diary shows the crowded and packed schedule of incessant activity which had become her reality since becoming a student. Carole is married with three children: Peter, Mark and Tracey aged eleven, nine and two years respectively:

Thursday 6th February, 1992.

6.30 Awoke to 'Today'. Best part of the day.
6.45 Had shower while Tom (husband) made tea. Unloaded dishwasher and washing maching.
7.00 Peter and Mark up and dressed. Tracey stirring. Hung washing out. Boys set table for breakfast. Tom dresses Tracey while I make beds and clean bathrooms.
7.30 Breakfast together.
7.45 Tom leaves for work. Children clean teeth and get their bags ready Tracey potters about helping them. I dust and hoover downstairs. Scrub potatoes and put cassserole in slow cooker.
8.10 Get everyone sorted out to leave home.
8.15 Leave the house. Wait for the school bus to arrive. See children off.
8.25 Take Tracey to childminder and then on to college.
9.00 Maths. Great session making games.11.00 Coffee and lunch with friends. Had good chat mostly about maths games.
12.00 Group of us met to write script for our language tape. Karen went with me to take car to garage in between work on language project. It went well.
3.00 Schools and Society lecture. Felt tired once I sat down to listen. Kept thinking about Peter and Mark. I always worry in case they forget to go to friend's house,. They haven't forgotten yet!
9.00 Get science project out to decide upon tomorrow's assignment. Tom arrived home. Ate supper while I chatted about science and Tom filled me on work.
10.30 Tom cleaned shoes while I made coffee.
10.45 Read chapter for Key Concepts
11.15 Lay down to sleep.

The structure of Carole's day is fairly typical of most of the diary recordings. The day begins early with an onslaught of domestic activity, the aim of which is to get as much housework and advanced meal preparation done as possible in order to create space at the end of the day to spend time with their children before they begin to work on college assignments. For those women with young children, a start on their academic work was seldom made before eight-thirty or nine o' clock, after the children had been settled in bed for the night. By this time their energy levels were low and, after an hour or so, they generally lost concentration, returned to more domestic chores in preparation for the next day and retired to bed. College work appears to fit in around the demands of family life into whatever slots and spaces occur amidst the family routine. What is striking about Carole's diary recordings and those of several other women students, is the high value they place upon spending time with their children. The experience of motherhood, as a significant and valued part of a woman's self, has been noted by other sociologists in writings on teachers' careers and women students returning to higher education, see especially, (Evetts, 1988 & 1990; Edwards, 1990 & 1993; Pascall & Cox, 1993;). Being a mother and enjoying the company of their children is a pleasure which is cherished and closely guarded from competing intrusions. Coping strategies designed to ensure that

academic work obligations can be fulfilled will therefore need to be constructed in ways which will not disrupt or threaten this important aspect of their private lives. Motherhood and the cultural expectations of what constitutes good mothering, (cf Evetts, 1988; Steedman, 1988; Burgess, H. & Carter, 1992)) is a core part of the mature women's identity and the success of their coping strategies will crucially depend upon this part of their 'selves' remaining intact. The pressure to keep on top of domestic routine and college work whilst still finding time to be with the children without the tensions rising to the surface, requires constant vigilance over a juggling act which must keep all the 'plates in the air'. The incessant round of chores, children and college work must simultaneously be kept in a perpetual motion of progress or all the 'plates' will come crashing down. This requires remarkable feats of organisation, planning and stamina on the part of the women. Even at weekends the pace remains high with little opportunity for relaxation. The following extract from Pamela Jones's diary was recorded on a Saturday. It was her son's birthday which she wanted to celebrate but it had to be fitted in around domestic and academic demands The competing pressures of the day are juggled in a non-stop flow of activity:

<u>Saturday 8th February, 1992.</u>

8.00 Got up, made a cup of tea.
8.10 Everyone in our room. Opened Nigel's cards and

presents.

8.30 Emptied washing machine. Put in another load. Filled tumble-dryer, washed up.

9.00 Drove into town with children to collect comptuter and to bank.

10.30 Came home, set up computer and played new games with children. It is Nigel's 12th birthday.

11.45 Made lunch. Emptied tumble dryer.

12.30 Took Nigel back to town to return faulty game, then onto his friend's home.

1.30 Came home, played with Ruth (her daughter).

2.00 Started Key Concepts essay again.

3.00 Helped friend construct a C.V. Typed it and printed a copy.

4.00 Prepared birthday meal for Nigel.

5.00 Final draft of essay.

5.30 Ate meal and watched TV.

6.00 Changed bed linen, washed up and cleaned kitchen.

7.00 Ironing.

8.00 Back on computer to produce finished essay.

8.50 Eureka! I've done it!

8.55 Glass of wine and TV. Reward for finishing essay. Loaded washing machine.

10.30 Went to bed.

When I discussed these diaries with the women, they seldom acknowledged how skilful they had been in getting through so many tasks each day. Instead, just as Evetts 1988 & 1990 noted in her investigation of the career strategies of primary women headteachers, 'they minimised their own organisational role in their career and family strategies', (1988, p. 527). When I asked them what their reactions were on re-reading their diaries they frequently commented on how 'boring' their lives had now become. This, for example, was the view of Karen James:

KJ I was surprised at how boring my life is. I seem to spend most

> of my life walking the dog and cooking the dinner. I don't seem to do anything except chase around doing all sorts of little jobs and I seem to have done quite a lot of studying in these 10 days.

However, the pattern in common to all the mature women students is one of overwhelming commitment to their course of teacher training and an ability to endure an extensive range of demands on their time and energy on an intensive, minute by minute, day-to-day basis. The price they pay is the virtual lack of any kind of social life and the loss of freedom to use their private time for personal leisure. Pamela Jones makes this point abundantly clear:

> PJ ....I mean this diary reads..... all it ever says is fill the machine, empty the tumble dryer and iron the clothes. There isn't actually any time in the whole....I think it was 12 days I managed to complete it.....there isn't any time in the whole 12 days when I've done anything for me. I mean I might have sat down for about five minutes and collapsed in a chair with a cup of coffee but I've got no social life according to this diary, whatsoever.

By the middle of the second term, the reality of being a student had made a significant impact opon the women's lives. It had seeped inexorably into most aspects of their private lives accelerating the tempo of their daily routines into a treadmill of constant activity.

Identity, Self Esteem and Confidence

Despite the all pervading nature of the student experience, the mounting pressure of essay deadlines and forthcoming examinations, the

women spoke enthusiastically about the enjoyment, challenge and stimulation they were getting from the course. Moreover, they spoke of the positive changes which had taken place in their self-esteem and in their identities as individuals. The following comments were commonplace among the women:

> .....I just love it. I just love the whole atmosphere, everything.
> (Carole Payne)

> .....I'm much more confident now and cope with things better now.... No, I enjoy the fact that this is doing something for my benefit. Not purely on a selfish level but just because I'm actually living life again, I'm not living life through other people which is what as a mother, with little children, you're very much doing. People here know me as 'me', not with my children or with my husband - here its me!
> (Christine Kift)

The subjective experience of being a student from the mature women's perspective is rather like the curate's egg, partly good and partly bad. The curriculum in the second term is challenging but difficult. They enjoy the demands made upon them to think about abstract ideas but dread the examinations. They acknowledge the gains made in their self confidence and welcome the stirrings of a new identity which education is opening up for them. But this is won at the expense of loss of time for their own personal leisure. They want to complete assignments on time and do well in them but they do not wish to relinquish the time spent with their children. Being a student is thus a contradictory experience which is not without tensions, struggle or conflict. An

important part of these contradictions and conflicts is rooted in the domestic and mothering roles assigned to them by gender. Equally important were the changes which were taking place in their re-assessment of themselves as mothers, wives, student teachers and women as individuals in their own right. Coping strategies devised to accommodate to the competing pressures in their lives, will need to take account of cultural and biographical factors. The question of the form which these coping strategies took and how they were negotiated, is the focus of the rest of the chapter.

Balancing College Work and Family Responsibility.

Strategies, according to Woods can be defined as the point where 'individual intention and external constraint meet. (They) are ways of achieving goals,' (1983,p.9). One common goal for the mature women students was the need to balance the demands of academic and family life. The strategies they used to cope with these twin demands were influenced by the structural constraints of gender, financial and material resources, cultural definitions of mothering and marital partnership, the constraints of the institution and the needs of self in a context of changing identity. Of fundamental importance to Pollard is the esentially subjective nature of 'coping' and its relationship to aspects of the self which need to be defended and protected. An individual's perceptions of coping will depend on how s/he defines the situation and

this will differ acccording to factors associated with socialisation and personal life experience. '....ultimately coping can be defined only personally, bearing in mind the backround biography of each individual.' (Pollard, 1985,p.152). The mature womens' subjective definitions of coping in the second term communicated a sense that any belief they had about being 'on top' of competing demands on their time was fleeting and transcient. The following two extracts indicate the fragility of the women's perceptions that they were coping with college work:

> CK Sometimes, I feel, oh God am I coping? Or am I going to cope? Not so much, am I coping? Because day-to-day I seem to be able to get through it but I do sort of think, exams, oh help, what am I going to do? I haven't read enough. But I haven't really felt low. In fact I feel good about what's happening. I panic but I don't get depressed about it. I enjoy the intellectual challenge as long as I'm coping day-to-day and I'm not suddenly getting to the point where I can't understand?
>
> (Christine Kift).

> BC I think if I can just keep going. I suppose if I can get the marks I've been getting.....I think if I got any lower I would be a bit despondent to be honest. I'm just about coping.
>
> (Brenda Corless).

The women have a sense that they are coping on a day-to-day basis with the academic work. What serves to threaten the tenuous perception that they are coping with academic work, is the thought of the Summer term examinations. For many women, the experience of examinations is not new, several having recently taken pre-entry examinations.

Nevertheless, the first year examinations are endowed with considerable significance because failure means that all their efforts to get this far along the route of teacher training, will have been wasted. It therefore foreshadowed much of their second term hanging over their heads like the sword of Damocles. It is the point at which the women feel that their ability to cope will be tested to the limit of their endurance. Confidence in their academic ability appeared to flicker on and off like a faulty torch bulb. Even if they had done well in their first essays, the next ones are approached with the same amount of anxiety and fear of failure. Regardless of hard won academic success so far, several women seemed convinced that the next academic challenge would be the one which tripped them up. Low levels of academic confidence among women in higher education has been well documented notably by (Woodley 1987; Edwards, 1993; Pascall & Cox, 1993). A striking feature of the data was the paradoxical nature of academic confidence among the women; they are constantly dogged by the thought of failure and yet many achieve marks within the 1st and 2:1 degree classification bands. If they do well and succeed, there are the inevitable consequences for family life in terms of the time and energy left to spend with their children and their partners. If they do not succeed and get lower marks for their next essay, their academic confidence and self-esteem suffers. For several women, being a high achiever is a

double-edged sword. This was certainly the case for Pauline Cash:

DD How did you fare with your first essay feedback?

PC I felt it was a big milestone at the time but I don't think it helped afterwards. I was still worried about the next essay. I thought I'd cope with school experience but it was the academic side that I was bothered about. I got good marks for my first essays which I think, in a way, hasn't helped because you've made a rod for your own back now. And my third one wasn't so good. It was still a good mark and if somebody had said at the beginning of the year, you'd get 62% for your essay, I'd have thought - Wonderful! But because it was a bit of a drop, I thought, oh no! Where have I gone wrong? My standards are slipping.

The first marks which the mature women students received were seen by them as a benchmark for future academic performance. A few marks lower down the same degree classification band is cause enough for concern but if the marks drop by one or more entire bands, the concern becomes intense anxiety which is not easily alleviated, even with reassurances from the marking tutor. Pat Grade, for example, having achieved marks of 65% and 63% for the Language and Child Development programmes, was distressed by the relatively low mark of 48% that she had achieved for her third essay, almost to the point of considering giving up the course:

PG Then we had the Primary Curriculum one and I only had 48% for that and that really knocked the feet from under me and I had that week before Alan (her husband) went into hospital - and when he went in, I said, I don't know if I really want to carry on. Is there any point? And I had a long talk to my Primary

> Curriculum tutor who said, don't worry about this and this. But to me it was a sort of warning, if you like. The tutor kept saying 48% was a pass mark and I shouldn't worry about it, but to me, it was a low mark and it wasn't good enough.

Pat may not originally have set herself the goal of maintaining a 2:1 degree mark profile, but, like many of the women, once this attainment had become a concrete reality by the achievement of good marks in their first essays, they were keen to maintain it (see appendix 1). Subsequent reductions in their marks therefore came as a considerable disappointment. Pat's distress was not, however, solely attributable to one relatively low essay mark. She had three children and had, before deciding to come on the course, agreed with her husband that she would need his help with childcare and the domestic routine if she was to be able to devote sufficient time to college work. Unfortunately, a sporting accident caused him severe back pain which eventually led to protracted treatment in hospital. Thus at an early point in the first year, Pat lost any help she might have had from her husband. Initial hopes for his recovery did not materialise and Alan eventually lost his job and, as his illness became progressively worse, his mobility became increasingly restricted. The 'warning' which Pat spoke of signalled her fear that she would have to cope with academic and family demands without the promise of help she had anticipated. The coping stategies constructed by Pat were therefore heavily constrained by financial

restrictions now that Alan was unemployed, by the greater demands upon her time which Alan's illness caused and by the mounting pressure on her to do well, now that she was likely to become the sole income earner in the family. Thus structural, biographical and life history factors combined to influence the strategies which Pat came to use. I asked Pat to articulate the strategies she had used to cope with the competing pressures of academic and domestic responsibility:

PG Well, everyone asks me this. The thing I've always done as soon as I get an assignment, I check through what's the assignment and I begin to build ideas straight away. I go straight away, the first time to the library because everyone usually leaves it to the end and that's when all the books have gone.

DD So you do the spade work straight away?

PG Oh yes. I have to because if I left it all to the end it would be too much at once so I just take great big quotes out of the book and write them down. Then I make a plan, a skeleton of what I'm going to go through and how. So I've been using the essay tutorials as opportunities to say, Well I've included this, this and this. Is that relevant? And they say, 'Fine.'

Pat had quickly learned that early visits to the library, preferably on the first or second day of a new term, paid off. At this point in her husband's illness, Alan was on half-pay and book purchase was a luxury she could no longer afford. She therefore had to depend upon the college library for her supply of books. Because of the greater family responsibilities she now had to bear, she knew that she could not leave

the writing of an essay too close to the deadline. Her strategy was therefore to make a start on it as soon as the essay titles were given out so that she could make progress on it in manageable chunks of time and which allowed her to keep abreast of her family commitments. One of the benefits of this advanced organisation was that she was able to use the essay tutorials [3] to check and confirm that she was on the right lines as far as content and essay structure was concerned. Pat's particular family circumstances limited the strategies available to her and sharpened her need to make maximum use of college facilities and uncommitted periods of time between lectures, when other mature students might have taken time out to have coffee and socialise with their friends. The burdens now placed upon Pat meant that she had to maximise whatever 'bits' of time came her way. She spoke a great deal about 'snatching', 'catching' and 'grabbing' time. The ability to make the best use of whatever odd moments of time which occurred in the women's crowded daily schedules, became an important survival strategy. Moreover, the way in which the women discussed the changes which had taken place with respect to their use of time, can be interpreted as one example of the many adaptations to the student role which took place during their first year. Christine Kift makes this point very clearly:

CK ....I think I've learned to grab time when I can, like this time when the kids are watching the television (In a previous conversation she said she had used this time for reading course related texts) instead of perhaps wittling around like I used to. I will actually think, right now, I'll sit down, even if its only for ten minutes. I'll grab it.

Time and energy were scarce resources in the women's lives and finding ways of making the most economic use of them was a fundamental goal in the strategies which the women used to cope with the scale of demands upon their time. In the words of Christine Kift, 'to try and hit a balance is quite difficult.' It became especially difficult for those mature students who were lone parents, or whose husbands would not, or, who could not help with domestic chores or child care responsibilities, as is the case with Pat Grade. I asked her how she was managing to cope:

PG Well, I'm a great one for rotas. I give the children rotas. They have to have certain responsibilities. I've told them if you want to help me to stay at college you've got to do some of this. So they do their own lunch boxes. They keep their bedrooms tidy and I do a routine check. I'll take up the hoover for them and they'll take it in turns to hoover their bedrooms and someone will hoover my bedroom.

Pat's creative response to the difficulties she now faced was to involve her children in whatever household chores they could physically manage. According to Pat, her children fully understood how important it was for their mother to be able to complete her B.Ed course so that she could eventually earn a much needed income, and

they willingly took on a share of domestic repsonsibilities. Pat took out an 'insurance' against the onset of tedium on the part of her children, by organising a rotation of jobs so that they each had a turn of doing different tasks. This served the purpose of keeping them involved in the domestic division of labour whilst reducing some of the domestic burden which Pat had to carry alone.

Guilt and Greedy Institutions

There are however critical points in the women's lives when trying to 'hit' the balance between academic work and family responsibilities, became especially difficult. Part of the tension arose from the fact that their lives were so tightly structured that there was no slack in the system to absorb additional burdens of responsibility. Any 'extra' demands on their time were therefore the source of immense anxiety and feelings of guilt at not being able to respond to family crises as well as they might if they were not full-time students. However, the conflict was at its sharpest when one of the children was ill and there were taught sessions at college which they felt they should not miss. Some of the women commented that they often sent their children to school in the hope that they would recover from minor ailments once they became involved in classroom activities. However, their 'cultural ideals of motherhood' (Evetts, 1988, p.512), and the persistence of the dominance of gender differences in a society which continues to allocate

the main responsibility for childcare to women, frequently resulted in feelings of intense guilt. Indeed, their dilemma in such circumstances brought about a 'double-bind' of guilt, Dyhouse (1992). If they went to college, they would feel guilty for sending their children to school feeling unwell: if they stayed at home to look after their children, they would feel guilty about neglecting their studies. Neither interest of self as student or self as mother, could be satisfied on these occasions: It was a no-win situation and one which was a common experience of the mature women students.

There now exists a growing literature on the powerful way in which guilt can undermine the opportunities available to women to pursue career development (Evetts, 1988 & 1990), leisure activities (Deem, 1988), and higher education (Acker, 1980; Edwards, 1993; Pascall & Cox, 1993), inter alia. Acker (1980) has described both family and higher education as 'greedy institutions' which claim undivided loyalty from their participants. In his definition of what constitutes a 'greedy institution', Coser (1974), contended that their demands on the individual were 'omnivorous', (p.4, 6) and, in an essay written jointly with Rose Coser, he argued that families were especially 'greedy' for women, 'requiring their constant allegiance and availability to cater to all physical and emotional needs in a way that is not required of men.' The Cosers go on to point out 'that many women accept the

cultural mandate of commiting themselves to their greedy families even when engaging in paid work, making themselves psychically available full-time even if they are not continuously physically present', (Coser,L. & Coser,R. (1974) cited in Edwards, 1993, pp 62-63). The insights offered by Edwards (1993) and the Cosers (1974) go some way towards explaining the pervasiveness of guilt and the powerful influence it exerted upon the women to comply with the 'omnivorous' demands of both institutions. When the women were at college they were thinking about their children and the household chores which had to be done, and when they were at home, doing the housework, they were worried about the essay they had not yet started or the books which lay unread. Guilt cannot then be seen solely as a psychological phenomena which affected those individuals who happened to be vulnerable to its influence. It is grounded in the unequal gender divisions of labour in which women, regardless of career status, income earning power or the demands placed upon them as full-time students, are still expected to shoulder the main burden of responsibility for child care and running the home. Its persistent grip on the mature women students' lived reality is also partly explained by the fact that they do not simply 'do' child care and housework; they 'are' mothers and wives and these roles are a core part of their identity as women. Thus when they feel guilty about not meeting their own expectations as mothers, a 'deeply-held,

"substantial" view of themselves', was affected, (Nias, 1984, p.268). Being a mother was a central part of their 'substantial identity' Ball (1972), and the women sought to protect and defend this highly valued part of their self interest. The emotion of guilt was therefore mediated to the women at three levels: at the structural level via gender relations; at the level of family and higher education institutions and at the level of individual identity. However, the mature women are in the process of developing another identity - an academic identity.

The Emergent Academic Identity

In the previous chapter, I used Ball's concept of 'situational' and 'substantial' identity to help explain the transitions which the women were undergoing in the classroom from a perception of themselves as mother helper to that of a student teacher identity. Ball's concept applied equally well to the adaptations which were taking place in the women as they adjusted to an academic student identity. It became as important to hold onto this newly acquired aspect of self as it was to protect their more established substantial selves as mothers and wives. Thus, during times of crisis and conflict when the powerful presence of guilt threatened the security of this role, they had to find coping strategies which reduced the intensity of guilt and safeguarded the continuation of their lives as students. In his model of coping strategies, Pollard, drawing on Rock (1979), made the point that

'various facets of self..... become prominent at various times depending on the processual ebb and flow of coping necessities', (1982, p.30). As the women approached their third term a new student self was beginning to emerge as another 'facet' of their self at some point on the Ball's continuum between situational and substantial identity. Its developing association with positive self-image, increased self-esteem, academic confidence and the 'I'm living life again' factor, had become too valued to relinquish. As the first year examinations drew nearer, their academic student identity became the 'prominent facet of self' and prevailing coping necessities demanded that they find a way of preparing for them which did not allow their families to become too 'greedy' on their time and energy. A great deal had been invested in the year thus far; they could not afford to risk failure at this important hurdle. Their student interests-at-hand had therefore to be protected in a way which did not seriously jeopardise their family's interests. An academic identity was becoming a new and prominent facet of their selves but the contradictions and dilemmas of the self as a whole, persisted (Rock, 1979).

Examination Preparation Strategies

A key feature of Lacey's social strategies (1977) and Pollard's coping strategies (1982 & 1985) is that they allow for the creative action of the individual within the context of experienced constraints.

The coping strategies which the women constructed to manage the revision for three written examination papers, contained the elements discussed above of guilt reduction, protection of the student-mother self and creative adaptation to situational demands.

Given the growing complexity of Pat Grade's life now that her husband's back condition had worsened, I was struck by her pragmatic and creative response to her straitened circrumstances now that she had the examinations to prepare for. I asked what strategies she was using to cope with examination revision:

PG My method is - I suppose its the wrong way to revise, I just take chunks of things and really condense them down to the smallest amount of words that I can, that will still retain the meaning. And then I just learn them 'parrot-fashion' and when I feel I've learned them, I write down what I know. My eldest daughter helps me. I put them on postcards and I just read out to her what's on the postcard. So at the beginning of the exam I wrote down all that I knew in pencil at the front of the exam paper, and then I just rearranged it. And I felt that really helped.

Pat went on to explain that she had learned 'trigger' words or headings which 'sparked off' the 'bumph' which went with them. Much of the examination revision had to be carried out during the Easter vacation which immediately preceded the examinations which took place at the end of April, at the beginning of the Summer term. For mature students with families this was a most unsuitable study period because the family was at home at the same time. Strategic use of time therefore had to be carefully planned and structured in ways which did not conflict too strongly with competing interests. The systematic scheduling of time within family life to accommodate a study activity which required uninterrupted periods of quiet concentration, was dependent upon two crucial factors: family members' understanding of that need and a preparedness to temporarily shift the burden of child care and domestic routine away from the women students.

The particular cirumstances of Pat's family commitments meant that she had the former but not the latter. The demands of three young children and a disabled husband meant that time could not be scheduled in any systematic way to suit her study needs. It had to be taken whenever it occurred:

PG It was snatched, a lot of it. If I was lucky I would get a whole hour, if not it'd be half an hour or even quarter of an hour. If I only learned one trigger word in a quarter of an hour, I'd think, at least its something, I'm on my way. It was snatched when I could do it.

At first sight, Pat's serendipitous use of time and her methods for examination revision might appear crude and unsophisticated. Her utilitarian approach to study scarcely fits Marton and Entwistle's (1984) criteria for a deep approach to learning which is characterised by an 'intention to understand and a vigorous interaction with content' (cited in Jones, N. & Frederickson, N.(Eds) 1990, p.13). It is, in fact, much closer to their criteria for a surface approach to student learning which includes the 'intention to complete task requirements and memorize information needed for assessments,' (p.13). However, Pat's coping necessity was to pass the first year examinations so that she could continue with the course whilst at the same time meeting the complex and time consuming demands of her family. She cannot afford to spend large amounts of time away from the family and there is no other adult or family member on whom she can shift her domestic responsiblities. She therefore reduced potential guilt on her part and conflict within the family by enlisting the help and involvement of her eldest child in memorizing key words and headings to help her recall of main theories and concepts. This would then serve as an aide memoire in the examination. This revision strategy was carried out during intensive, short bursts of time, whenever she could free herself from family commitments. The constraints of limited time and available energy are mediated through the institution of the family which strongly

influenced the strategies which she was able to use. She adapted to these constraining factors by scaling down the revision enterprise to a postcard-size distillation which had the merit of being both physically and psychologically manageable. In this way the prominent interests of the student self were met, albeit in a rough-hewn and inchoate modus operandi, without sacrificing the interests of the family.

Closely related to identity, is personal biography which also exerts an influence on an individual's action and which plays an important part in the construction of coping strategies, (Sikes, Measor & Woods, 1985; Ball & Goodson, 1985; Pollard, 1982 & 1985). Pat's ebullient and resiliant personality clearly played an important part in sustaining her essentially positive attitude to a taxing set of family circumstances. Her ability, for example, to make constructive use of a quarter of an hour and comment, 'at least its something, I'm on my way', was indicative of her positive and buoyant approach throughout the problems she experienced during the year. Using the concept of coping strategy as a tool of analysis, Pat Grade's rudimentary methods for examination revision can be viewed not simply as a surface and instrumental approach to learning, but as a highly rational, pragmatic and creative response to the situational demands of both her interests and those of her family.

When Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985) reviewed Lacey's work

(1977) on teacher strategies they claimed that between Lacey's second and third strategic orientation of internalised adjustment and strategic re-orientation, there were a variety of strategies of adaptation. Out of these varieties they developed a fourth category which they called, 'strategic compromise' (1985, p.238) which they defined as 'finding ways of adapting to the situation that allows room for their interests, while accepting some kind of modification of those interests' (1985, p.238). In her investigation of primary women teachers' careers, Evetts (1990) used this category to examine the career experiences of the women in her study and the way in which they coped with the dual expectations and commitments of teaching and family responsibility. The category of strategic compromise also fitted closely with the orientation which Pat Grade used. Moreover, the description which Sikes, Measor and Woods used to define it, is particularly pertinent to the way in which she adapted to the changing circumstances of her family life whilst she redefined the situation, not to change it, but to change her expectations of what she could realistically achieve as far as her academic interests were concerned. The alignment of public and private goals in Pat's case was forged out of a pragmatic and realistic approach to her problems which necessitated a lowering of academic expectations to accommodate family need. This strategic orientation, whilst meeting much of the criteria for the category of strategic

compromise, might be more accurately described as 'strategic pragmatism'. It has its roots in strategic compromise but allows for a greater degree of control over external constraint and the multifaceted interests of self. Pat did not give up or suspend her course of teacher training but found a way of meeting her dual commitments through coping strategies which were driven by practical realism.

Pat Grade's strategies have been examined in the context of a small part of her life history. The analysis showed what the subjective experience of coping meant to her and what it was she had to cope with. Her coping strategies were not simply a reaction to experienced constraints: they were influenced by a combination of structural, institutional, life history, biographical and self needs. What is striking is the way in which all these elements come together in the form of coping strategies which made it possible to examine the whole in terms of its constituent parts. The interrelationship of these factors within the concept of coping strategy produces a multi-layered and 'focused matrix' which helped to illuminate the processes of student teacher adaptation (Pollard, 1982, p.32). Whilst the particular coping strategies varied according to context, structural and biographical features in the women's lives, they all included the same interrelationship of elements described above. Some women, for example, made intricate weekly revision plans with clearly specified

daily goals. Others used the friendship groups they had established at college and shared out the topics for revision between them, coming together both before and during the Easter vacation to pool ideas and insights. One woman took her young family off to her sister's home and rented a holiday cottage nearby thus enabling her to study in peace whilst being near enough for her to reach her children quickly should the need arise. Another took her books and notes on a family skiing holiday. She spent the day skiing with her husband and children and then, when she returned to the hotel at the end of the day, her husband took the children swimming whilst she revised for two hours before dinner in the evening. According to women , the key to coping with what was commonly cited as the most stressful point in the first year, was organisation and forward planning and the support and help of friends, family and neighbours. Barbara Melling made this point very succinctly:

BM Its mainly organisation and thinking ahead as well as having a good bunch of friends to meet up with.

Resourcing Coping Strategies

Material and personal resources combined with the abilty to negotiate change, are argued to be crucial factors in determining the success or, lack of it, in the construction of coping strategies which enabled the women to pass the end of year examinations without serious

disruption to their family lives. Coping strategies were experienced differentially according to the level of resource which the women had at their disposal. Morgan (1989), commenting on an article written by Crow (1989) on the concept of strategy, made the point that social and historical analyses of strategies should include analyses of resources. He argued that 'without resources there can be no strategies'. Because resources are associated with issues of power and structural constraints, 'strategies beget resources as much as current resources limit strategies', (1989, p.27). I have already discussed the way in which Pat Grade's financial and material resources both limited and determined her coping strategies. This was true of a number of the mature women students and, indeed for some of them, their resource provision worsened during the course of the first year as their lives changed in significant respects. For example, one woman's husband became bankrupt which led to a chain of escalating financial difficulties, eventually resulting in the repossession of their home. Two women separated from their husbands and became dependent on Income Support as their main financial resource. In both cases, the women had to supplement their income by working part-time during evenings and weekends thereby reducing the time available for academic study. Several other women experienced the effects of a deepening economic recession in which their husbands had their working week reduced with the inevitable

consequence of reduced earnings. Even when these factors were not part of their experience, those women who had paid employment before taking up the B.Ed Course, found themselves in debt by the end of the year as a result of having the family income reduced from two incomes to one. For these women, their ability to purchase the essential tools of academe such as books, photocopied material and word-processing equipment, which might have made their lives more manageable, was severely restricted. Other women whose husbands were in well paid, professional jobs did not experience these restrictions and were able to buy all the materials they needed. There were also significant variations in the study facilities available to the women. These ranged from sharing a kitchen table at the same time as children were doing their homework to fully equipped studies complete with the latest state-of-the-art micro computer technology. Those women who were lone parents with young children and who had to work part-time in order to meet their financial commitments, were particularly restricted in the strategies which they could use. The limitations on the time they had available for study, the fact that there was no one else with whom to share the childcare and domestic responsibilities on top of financial difficulties, clearly reduced the choice of available strategies. For these women, the construction of coping strategies was informed by a strong element of pragmatism. Ultimately, they could only do what was

possible in the time that was left after other commitments had been met. Like Pat Grade. this meant scaling down both academic and domestic work to the bare essentials in order to 'survive'. The prioritising of housework to basic necessities was also noted by Edwards (1993) and Pascall and Cox (1993) in their study of mature women students. Diane Young, whose marriage broke up during her first term at college, described the difficulties she was experiencing in coming to terms with marital separation, being a lone parent, financial problems as well as being a full-time student. 'Strategic task reduction' and strategic pragmatism were two of her main coping strategies:

> DY .....I find it very difficult to keep up with the reading both as far as time and fatigue are concerned. By the end of the day its.....whether its because I'm trying to fill two roles at home as well as this, I don't know but I tend to do just the essential reading and none of the extended reading. So really, I'm cutting myself down to two books. Well, I just can't fit it in any other way.

For students like Diane, the support of friends and family became a crucial resource. Many of the women acknowledged the importance of friendship groups at college with whom they could share hopes, disappointments, worries and laughter. Several women in the study claimed that they had relied heavily on the support and help of parents and parents-in-law, some of whom not only regularly cared for the children but also provided financial assistance during times of crisis.

In this connection, it is worth noting that the parents of these women, many of whom were in their thirties and forties, still figured prominently in their lives. They were warmly acknowledged both for the emotional support and encouragement which they gave their daughters.

Husbands also figured prominently in the women's discussions of coping strategies. Some of them played a major part in their coping strategies whilst others thwarted and obstructed the strategies which the women were trying to implement. In this study there was more evidence of the former than the latter. Some husbands not only actively encouraged their wives to train for teaching in the first place but spurred them on and supported them during times of crisis in their first year. There was also frequent mention of the way in which the husbands took on an increased share of domestic chores ,although it was evident from the women's accounts that the responsibility for initiating and orchestrating the newly constructed divisions of labour, mainly rested with them. Whilst childcare responsibilities mostly fell to the women, especially in relation to the collection of children to and from school, there were several incidences of husbands taking time off work when the children were ill, or who took leave during half-terms and holidays so that the women could study without interruption. Contrary to Evetts findings (1988 & 1990), I found a greater willingness on the

part of male partners to help their wives with childcare than I had initially anticipated. Listening to the women's accounts of the part their husbands played in family life, I got a sense from just under half of them, that their partners placed a high value on the time they spent with their children and that they welcomed the opportunity to take a greater part in the everyday care of their children. Towards the end of her more recent work on womens' educational careers, Evetts(1990) acknowledges that a growing research interest in this area (cf Rapoport & Sierakowski, 1982; Robertson, 1985; Scase & Goffee, 1989) suggests that both men and women are increasingly putting home, family and other interests before work in making career decisions' (1990, p.177). The other form of support which the women referred to was academic support. This took the form of taking an interest in the theories and ideas the women were writing about and proof reading their essays. Christine Kift acknowledges the help and interest which her graduate husband took in her essays:

> CK .....He's a very good sounding board as well. If I write an essay I always give it to him to read because if he can understand it, then I've said what I need to say. He may not understand some of the terms completely, but at least it makes sense and its relevant.....Its quite good to have an objective view. Its very helpful that his standard of education or whatever, is high, because I can trust his judgement. If he says, That's not good enough, then I know he's right. He's very, picky on grammar and things like that.

The picture which emerged from the women who experienced this form of support, was one of an enriched and enhanced family life due to the sharing and involvement of husbands in their wives' experience of higher education.

Christine Kift put this point succinctly:

> CK .....and I think also involving him makes it easier because its not as if we're going off in two different directions which was one of the concerns I had. We keep together this way, we keep going.

Those women who experienced all three forms of support from their husbands - emotional, practical and academic, formed an advantaged and privileged group compared to the women who were lone parents or whose husbands were not supportive of the womens' involvement in higher education. A particularly advantaged group were those women whose husbands had experienced higher education themselves. Husband graduates understood the pressures of essay writing and examination periods thus the emotional support they were able to give was strengthened by knowledge and 'in house' experience. Gail Prince, for example was particularly advantaged insofar as she possessed a high level of both material and personal resources. She had a well equipped study and was able to pay for help with the cleaning and ironing. She also had a personal computer and was able to purchase the books she needed. Her husband, who was a solicitor, encouraged her, read,

discussed, photocopied and bound her essays. He also did all her photocopying at work and took the major responsibility for cooking the family meals. He enjoyed spending time with the two children and, whilst she took the main reponsibility for taking them to and from school, he took over at weekends leaving her free to study without interruption. This is not to suggest that Gail Prince's adjustment to the student role was without problems. However, compared with the women who had a range of emotionally taxing family difficulties, financial problems and husbands who could or did not offer any form of support, her adjustment to the student role is argued to be a smoother and far less fraught experience than those with significantly less material or personal resources.

Negotiating Change.

The process of adjustment in the relatively brief period of one year is neither smooth or linear. It occurs in fits and starts and through trial and error and has much of the character of ad hoc development as did the strategies of Evetts'(1990) women teachers. It is possible, however, to discern turning points in the women's adjustment to the student role and, for some women, these seemed to occur at various points between the second and third terms. A Key concept in Pollard's model of classroom coping strategies is that of negotiation. 'Through negotiation teachers and pupils find ways of

accommodating to each other's interests in ways which avoid overt conflict (1985, p.158). Turning points appeared to be determined by the ability of the women to successfully negotiate change both with their families and within themselves in the form of coping strategies which either served their joint interests and/or which reduced conflict and tension between themselves and their families. An important factor in the successful negotiation of coping strategies was dependent on a personal identity which rested comfortably with their expectations as mothers and wives alongside their developing academic identity. The women's emergent academic identity was strongly associated with a number of positive gains in their self-image. Greater confidence, increased self-esteem, newly acquired skills and knowledge, confirmation of their ability to teach, a renewed belief in themselves as individuals with a contribution to make which went beyond the roles of mothering and domesticity. Pascall and Cox (1993) made a similar observation in their study of mature women returners to higher education commenting that the women 'saw education as a source of identity when being a housewife failed to perform that function' (p.76). The women in this study valued very highly the status and positive benefits to self which their emergent academic identity gave them. When it was threatened by family conflicts and crises they negotiated coping strategies which protected and defended their interests. In some

cases the successful negotiation of strategies required a determined and unequivocal stance on their part. Christine Kift adopted this approach during the examination period:

> CK Basically I used to leave home at 7 in the morning and go and have a cup of coffee with one of the girls who lives in a student house and just let the family get on with it because I couldn't cope with the hassles of breakfast. So I laid it on the line to them before I started that this was how it was going to be and if they didn't like it, well that was just too bad - because this was what I'd been working for all year and if I blew this, then the whole of the rest of the year was a complete waste of time.

Taking this unambiguous line about her wish to do well in the examinations without letting the family interfere with her preparation for them in any way, can be seen as a turning point in her adjustment to the student role. At the end of the year Christine was able to state that she was now coping well with the course and that her perceptions of coping were no longer subject to the same degree of fluctuation that she had experienced in the second term:

> CK You always start off something very tight, everything's got to be just so. But now I find that I can let things go. There are evenings when I can sit and watch the television as long as I've done an hour or two. I don't spend all evening like I did to begin with.....its probably slightly easier than I thought ...for me to cope.....not that the course is easier, but I can cope better I'm finding I can cope.....I do like the fact that I'm coping with it. I'm using what ability I've got rather than letting it all go. I think I'm more selfish now, but happier.

Christine was able to identify the changes that had taken place within her during the course of the first year. She also demonstrated the interrelationship which existed between coping strategies and identity. Coping was identified positively and was associated with a 'happier' self image. The darker side of the coin appeared to be that she had now become more 'selfish' as a consequence. Her determination to do well and not to allow her families' claims on her time and energy dwarf her own needs, is seen self-critically rather than positively. Her identity had changed in significant respects but was nonetheless still gendered insofar as she continued to believe that it was acceptable for her to service the needs of others but 'selfish' to satisfy her own needs.

The process of change via coping stategies is seldom static. As circumstances change it becomes necessary to negotiate and re-negotiate coping strategies. Beth Wells for example, spoke of how the increased pressure of work at college and a period of illness on her part, had brought about a need to reconsider and re-assess the strategy which she and her husband were using to cope with domestic chores. Initially, they had a fairly loose arrangement about the allocation of responsibilities in the home but this frequently meant that the greater share fell to her. Re-negotiation took place and a more clearly specified division of labour was formulated. During the fourth interview when Beth was asked to look back over the year and identify

the changes which had taken place she made the point that she and her husband were still adapting and looking for ways to improve things:

BW Its been a process of adaptation really. We've constantly adapted this year but we probably haven't cracked it yet but we've been constantly battling to get through the best we can. Yes, its only been positive.

Not all students were able to speak so positively about the changes which had taken place during the year. For some, the struggle and conflict at home made the reality of being a student a stressful and problematic experience. Marilyn Smith was married to a lecturer in higher education, one of the few graduate husbands who managed to thwart his wife's coping strategies. He supported her academically by getting books for her from his institutional library and he read through her essays. But on the eve of an examination when Marilyn wanted to revise, he made things worse rather than better:

MS The children were very good on the whole but on the evening before the exam I asked my husband if he would put the children to bed because I wanted to revise and he is not very good at putting them to bed. He just yells and yells and yells and they ended up in tears so I had to go to see to them.

DD So it wasn't really any help to you?

MS In fact it was the reverse and it ended up taking twice as long to put them to bed and my youngest daughter woke up in the night before my first exam so I hardly got any sleep. She always does this to me. Although he thinks he helps,

> he doesn't. I mean he's got quite a responsible job. He just sort of thinks that he should come home in the evening and he should relax and talk to me about his work.

There appeared to be very little negotiation between Marilyn and her husband with regard to childcare or housework. What little adaptation there was, seemed to be on a piecemeal basis with no clear strategy or plan. The consequence for Marilyn was a state of continual fatigue and a strong sense that she was not coping at any level. She felt conflict as a mother, frustration as a wife and exhaustion as a student. There was little evidence of the achievement or exhilaration which many of the women said they felt at the end of the year.

Four main groups of women emerged from the analysis of coping strategies: firstly a particularly advantaged group of women, often married to graduate husbands in well paid professional posts, who were well resourced materially and personally. They had all three forms of support from their husbands and, where they engaged the interest of the family in what they were doing at college, the lives of their family as well as their own appeared to be enriched and enhanced. Student teacher adaptation had taken place by the end of the year and had formed, or was in the process, of becoming part of their substantial identity. By and large becoming a student had been an exhilarating and positive experience and their main strategy had been to maximise the resources they had at their disposal - 'strategic resource maximisation.'

The second group was not materially well resourced and the support of husbands may have been available in only one form for a variety of reasons. Where limitations occurred in both material and personal resourcing, the range of available coping strategies was restricted. Where financial problems existed expending more of the womens' emotional and physical energy, 'strategic task-reduction' and 'strategic pragmatism' were the main coping strategies employed by the women in both academic and domestic tasks. The support of friends and relatives was of crucial importance to this group. Coping strategies, whilst limited, could nonetheless result in successful adaptation to the student role which became or, was in the process of, becoming part of their substantial identity. Its achievement, however, was hard won and personal struggle, conflict and frustration were commonly experienced by women in this group.

The third group contains all the characteristics of the second group the main difference being the absence of a male partner. Financial hardship is a major cause of anxiety and sometimes hinders the enjoyment of being a student. The emerging academic identity is highly valued for its positive associations with self-esteem and confidence both of which are likely to have suffered if marital breakdown had occurred in the recent past. Support from college friends and relatives was crucially important in their adjustment to the

strategies was restricted to what was realistically possible and the use of strategic task reduction and strategic pragmatism also featured prominently in their coping strategies. The student role had become part of their substantial identity but its achievement was not without struggle, conflict and anxiety.

The fourth group are characterised by lack of support within the immediate family. Husbands frustrated the attempts of the women to construct coping stategies and the situation was sometimes exacerbated by older children who also made no attempt to accommodate to the interests of their mother. Negotiation and accommodation to joint interests had not been successful because it was piecemeal, ad hoc and not part of a mutually agreed plan. Lack of emotional and practical support from members of the family is seen as the major obstacle in the process of student adaptation as is the lack of success in the women to involve the family in their teacher training course. Student adaptation had not yet taken place and the student identity was still situational. These women felt that they were students whilst they were at college but not when they were with their families at home.

The analysis of coping strategies in the context of the student-teacher socialisation of a group of mature women has uncovered some of the processes of adaptation which the women experienced during the course of their first year. The strength of the concept of coping strategy lies

in its ability to bring together in a 'focused matrix' (Pollard, 1982), the interrelating factors of structure, institution and biography. At the level of the individual it acknowledges the importance of subjective experience and identity. It is a dynamic concept which recognises that coping strategies are not static and will therefore change as needs, interests and circumstances change. It is, above all, a concept which allows for the creativity of the individual despite powerful and constraining structural factors. In the context of the mature women it illuminated both the complexity of interconnecting influences upon their choice of coping strategies and their ability to take some control over their emerging student identity.

The next chapter attempts to bring together some of the themes and issues raised in this study in the context of a case study of one of the women in the research group.

NOTES

(1) The B.Ed degree classification system at Riverdale College operated the following mark bands:

	Marks
1st	70 - 100
2.1	60 - 69
2.2	50 - 59
3rd	45 - 49
Pass	40 - 44
Fail	39 - 0

(2) Hamm, C. (1989) Philosophical Issues in Education: An Introduction London: The Falmer Press.

(3) Most programmes in the first year give over one or two teaching sessions for the purpose of tutorial assistance with essays. Attendance is not compulsory but students are advised to make use of them in order to ensure that they understand the requirements of undergraduate work. Despite advice to the contrary, many students attend essay tutorials in the hope that they will be told the key elements to include in the essay, often referred to as 'spoonfeeding.' The more assiduous students use the essay tutorial to check that they are 'on the right lines' in their outline plans, and mature students form a prominent part of this group.

CHAPTER 7

CONFIDENCE, CRISIS AND IDENTITY: A CASE STUDY

In order to provide a further layer of understanding and to 'test' the ethnographic veracity of the concepts yielded by the coping strategy analysis, this chapter will explore the way in which all the themes come together in the context of the lived experience of one of the women in the study. Ann Major has been chosen for critical study because her life history, as it was recounted during the year of the study, exemplifies well the way in which the themes of gender, identity, life course and the negotiation of change are played out alongside the concept of coping strategy to reveal an interconnecting pattern of student socialization. The use of a single case study to illustrate and draw together the themes and concepts which have emerged from the data, has a precedent in Pons's (1969) study of an African urban community and Burgess's (1983) study of a Roman Catholic comprehensive school.

Many of the twenty-five women in the study suffered personal and domestic crises of one form or another in their first year of the B.Ed course. Indeed, such was the frequency and scale of the crises which

occurred in some of the women's lives that one or two wondered, in their bleakest moments, whether their full-time participation on the course had not actually precipitated them. Ann Major experienced an enduring domestic crisis which critically affected the way in which she adapted to the student role, the coping strategies she used to manage academic and family responsibility, her academic confidence and identity. The experience of one or more of these life crises will often test to the limit an individual's emotional, mental and physical resources. Sometimes however, critical periods can bring into sharp focus the true nature of an individual's beliefs, commitment and priorities as well as a changed perspective on life. (A fuller discussion of these issues can be found in Pincus, 1974; Rowe, 1989; Egan, 1895 & Vaughan, 1987). The particular way in which Ann Major lived through her crisis powerfully demonstrates the close interrelationship of human agency with social structure, of biography with the institutions of family and education and of socially constructed perceptions of self with identity. At the centre of this complex network of connecting strands is the question of how far gender relations constrained and influenced her ability to overcome and resolve the problems which beset her throughout the year.

Ann Major's Life History

During the year of the fieldwork Ann was forty-one and married with two girls of thirteen and fifteen years respectively. Based upon her father's and mother's occupations she described herself as a working class girl who went to a grammar school:

AM ....My father was a postman. My mother didn't work. She had four children in four and a half years and she thought that was her work. We lived in three rooms with a tin tub in front of the fire on a Sunday night and I mean you can't be much more working class than that, can you? Outside toilet....

However, home ownership, a car, along with values and a lifestyle which differed from those of her parents contributed to a perception on her part that she was now upwardly mobile in the social class structure. She recognised that if she completed her training as a teacher she would be entering a middle class profession but was hesitant about whether this fact alone would confirm her as a member of the middle class. Having spent six months in the sixth form of a grammar school, she reluctantly left school on her mother's insistence. Her parents were in the process of marital separation and her mother was unable to support her at school any longer. Ann was taken by her mother to the Youth Employment Office and began work as a costs clerk the following week. Her disappointment at not being able to take her A' levels as well as the lack of any encouragement from school is clearly evident in the following extract:

AM I got a job, went back to school and said, "I'm leaving at the end of the week", and the Headmistress said, "Fine. You've gone

> into the numbers for our sixth form. You've made up the percentage that we wanted. You can go now." And that was all the encouragement that I got.

Ann remained in office work for six years during which time she got married and had two children. Once the children were born there followed a succession of low paid, low status, part-time jobs which had to be fitted in around the housework and childcare arrangements. The dominance of a pattern which put the needs of husbands, children and the home first, was typical of many of the women in the study. The persistance of gender inequalities in the home and in the job market or, what is often referred to as a domestic ideology, which is then in turn reproduced by social forces and cultural expectations, is now a well documented and central theme of feminist research in sociology (cf. Purvis, 1981; Anyon, 1983; Acker, 1989; Gaskell, 1992; Pascall & Cox, 1993a). The question which some of these writers are now beginning to confront is the issue of how far social and cultural theories of reproduction [1] actually accord with and determine women's lived experiences and how far they are able to resist the forces which ensnare them into unequal domestic divisions of labour and low-paid, segregated 'women's work' in which there are scant career opportunities. These are important questions and ones which the forthcoming data will attempt to address.

For eleven years, Ann worked during the evenings in a fish and

chip shop as well as helping out in a local school as a parent helper, once her children were older. When her husband was made redundant in the recession of 1986, she had to find a way of increasing their income, not least because they had recently moved house. In common with many people, the effects of a recession and a sharp boom in house prices had combined to more than double their previous house mortgage. She succeeded in ameliorating the family's financial difficulties by increasing her hours of work at the fish and chip shop and finding paid employment as a classroom assistant in a primary school. It was her paid work with children which revived her wish to teach but, having left school without A' levels, she decided to study for an evening A' level course in sociology [2] at the local college of further education.

Her employment as a classroom helper gave her the confidence in the public world she needed to apply for a place on a teacher training course. In common with many women in the study, a professed lack of confidence academically, as well as in her ability to cope with the world outside the home, pervaded the interviews and her self perceptions. Ann's judgement about her ability to inch forward towards the beginnings of a career plan was based on the material experience of working alongside teachers. Her daily work in the classroom made it possible for her to weigh up her potential for teaching against that of

practising teachers:

AM .....I'm not a particularly confident person and I think the work of an ancillary actually sort of nudged me into a little more confidence - and that, yes, I can do it and sort of looking round at lots of other teachers and thinking that - maybe I wouldn't be as good as *you* - but I'm sure I'd be as good as *you*..

Her absence from study for over twenty years meant that she initially found concentrating and retaining information, difficult and it was not until she received marks of between 60% and 65% for several A' level essays, that confidence in her academic ability began to grow. I asked her if her good essay grades had eased the difficulties she had experienced in concentrating on reading for sustained periods of time:

AM Not particularly, at the moment, no. No. Because I 'phoned you a few weeks ago and explained about my father being really ill.

Ann went on to tell me that her father was terminally ill with cancer and currently in a hospice. The prognosis given to her by her father's Doctor was that he was likely to die during the A' level examination period. She was understandably worried that she would not be able to give her full mind to the necessary examination preparation and that if she failed her A' level, would not then meet the conditions for mature student entry and therefore be unable to take up her offer of a place in the forthcoming academic year. In my capacity as admissions tutor I was able to reassure Ann that should her father's death prevent her from taking the A' level examination, it would be possible to accept one

of her recently submitted essays as evidence of her ability to cope with academic work at undergraduate level.

Ann subsequently enrolled on the B.Ed Course having survived the crisis of her father's death as well as passing her A' level. She quickly became fully involved in the course but soon realised that some changes would have to take place at home and within herself if she was to cope with the demands of being a full-time student.

Academic confidence

One necessary change concerned a lack of belief in her academic ability which dogged her throughout the first year. She had signalled this concern several times during the first interview and at one point revealed the nature of her fear when she asked me:

> AM Is somebody suddenly going to say something that's way above my head and I won't have a clue what they're talking about?

In the second interview she told me that she felt it necessary to let tutors know, at an early point, that she lacked academic confidence and that they should not be duped by outward shows of confidence. Whilst she acknowledged that she was, by comparison, more confident than some of her peers, her doubts about her academic ability remained with her for much of the first term. It was not until she had received the marks for her first essay assignments that she began to believe in her academic ability. In the first term, she was greatly encouraged by her essay marks of 50, 64 and 72, the latter being a mark of distinction. She had

been so heartened by this evidence of her ability that she admitted to being 'on a high' for much of the second term. However, in common with many of the mature women students, this feeling of elation is merely a temporary respite from nagging self doubt whose spectre reappears the moment another essay or academic hurdle is on the horizon:

DD Do you feel that your academic confidence has risen since you've been here?

AM Yes. But I'm beginning to worry about the exams now.

It would seem that Ann's perception of confidence, like many women in the study, remains context-bound with minimum transferability to other assignments. It is as though they fear that their success has merely been a 'glitch'; the next hurdle will catch them out and expose their academic worth for what it really is. In fact, Ann did better than she expected in the first year examinations, gaining a mark of 62% for course work and examinations overall. However, her perceptions of her academic confidence are steeped in contradictions. She does not believe in her own ability yet she consistently achieves good marks. She gains a measure of self esteem which does not last. She insists she only wants to pass but strives on every assignment to attain a 2:1 mark and becomes despondent when her marks fall below this classification. She is, in fact, a high achiever but does not admit it. Something of the contradictory nature of these perceptions is revealed in the following

extract:

DD So you were pleased with your mark and you've come out with a 2:1 mark overall. Is that what you were aiming for?

AM No. I was aiming to pass.

DD What is your objective now for the degree classification you want to get at the end of year four?

AM Um.....I would love to still be on a 2:1 but it doesn't matter that much to me.

DD Really? What does matter?

AM What matters is that I pass. I mean it would be lovely to have that mark - but it really would be the icing on the cake. But... I want the cake (peals of laughter)!

This pattern of confidence being almost immediately eclipsed by the thought of the next assignment was replicated across the data, as was the gap between what the women *said* they wanted as far as degree classification was concerned, and what they actually *did* in terms of effort and achievement.

Apart from some relatively recent quantitative data (cf Morgan, 1981; Smithers & Griffin, 1986; Woodley, et al., 1987) there appears to be very little sociological analysis of the relationship of academic confidence with women's experience in higher education, (for a fuller discussion of this research, see chapter 1). With the exception of an article by Taylorson (1984) which deals with the tensions between academic and gender identity in women Ph.D candidates, there is also

very little qualitative data which deals with the processes of change and self understanding which women reach in their quest for increased levels of academic confidence. The question of why more mature women students than men suffer from a lack of confidence has yet to be answered. What are its causes and why does it persist even in the face of evidence to the contrary? The following argument is a speculative attempt to begin to address these questions.

Some light is thrown on the genesis of Ann's lack of academic confidence in an extract from a letter which she wrote to me two years after the fieldwork had been completed:

> I have thought a good deal lately about my increase in confidence in recent years and although this is partly due to my relative success at college, it is not entirely so. At primary school I stood out above the others there and was always top of my year group of around ninety children but my mother was concerned that I should not become 'big-headed' and constantly put me down. I am sure she would have been horrified had she ever realised how this affected me then and has done since. Of course Howard (her husband) then continued the knocking down process and I, used to nothing else, allowed him to. With all this now in the past, I do feel confident that I will successfully complete the B.Ed and even if not as confident as you about the 2:1, feel sure that I will at least get a 2:2 (perhaps it's not so much about confidence as sticking one's neck out, I have at least arrived at the stage of openly admitting that I want a 2:1).
>
> (Extract from a letter from Ann Major 20/8/94).

This extract shows that the basis of Ann's doubts about her own ability are rooted in her life history. In childhood, her mother refused to reinforce her obvious success at primary school, and in marriage, her husband was 'allowed' to continue the process by his critical attitude and

lack of interest in her academic development. A telling comment which underlines the unequal power relations in the marriage is taken from a diary entry which Ann wrote whilst she was in the second term of her first year as a B.Ed student:

> 3.15pm Helped Howard write a job application
> 3.35pm Study - essay
> 4.20pm Finished essay. Reading through essay.
> 4.30pm Read it to Howard. He was unimpressed!!
> (Diary entry - Ann Major, Sunday 9th February, 1992)

Two significant others in Ann's life consistently interact with her in a way which eventually ensures that she is confused and unsure about her academic ability. In the context of this biographical detail it becomes possible to understand why Ann's lack of confidence persisted throughout much of her first year at college. Psychological theories of socialization however, only offer a partial explanation of Ann's lack of confidence. They do not explain why her self doubt was sustained or how she gradually overcame its worst effects.

The literature in sociology on the subordination of women in the home, the work place and the education system has largely been premissed upon theories of social and cultural reproduction (cf.MacDonald, 1980) which argue that the education system reproduces the social relations of wider society.[3] An important feature of this theory is the central role given to schools in preparing girls for domesticity via the processes of the hidden curriculum and gender-

segregated forms of curriculum organisation (Deem, 1978, 1980; David, 1980). Many girls then leave school with inadequate qualifications to pursue a career and end up in what has become termed 'women's work' typically to be found in shops, offices, banks, restaurants, manufacturing and hospitals. The common pattern for the women in the study was a brief spell in the world of work followed by marriage, childbirth and a re-entry into work which fitted in with the family's needs. The cultural expectations of what a patriarchal society considers to be a 'good mother and good wife' (cf.Steedman,1988; Grumet, 1988), have a strong influence on what counts as appropriate work in the home for men and women. The effects of this domestic hegemony result in women taking the major share of reponsibility for childcare and household labour.

Whilst an examination of Ann's life history reveals the strong influence of structural forces on her experience in paid employment and the acceptance of her mother's and husband's denial of her academic ability, it does not explain her resistance to family expectations of her role, or her success in eventually overcoming them. Several writers (cf. Acker, 1992; Gaskell, 1992; Pascall & Cox, 1993) have now begun to question theories of reproduction which explain women's unequal experience in education, the job market and the family solely as the overdetermined outcome of social and cultural forces. Most

importantly, these theories do not leave scope for the influence of biography, history and change in an individual's life. Neither do they deal adequately with the way in which gender intersects with biography and social forces to reproduce inequality.

By the end of her first year as a full-time student teacher, Ann admitted to an 'enormous' increase in confidence. What accounted for this change and how did it happen? One part of the answer is that Ann, like the women returners in Pascall and Cox's study, saw education and the prospect of becoming a teacher, as a way out of domesticity and poor job opportunities. She inched her way towards this goal by taking paid employment in the lower echelons of the primary school hierarchy. There she found success and satisfaction in the relatively public world of the school and in particular, in her dealings with children. Significant others, outside her past and present family, in the form of practising teachers, a headteacher and the vicar of her local church, believed in her potential to become a teacher and frequently told her so. This encouragement spurred her on to take the first step towards making her aspiration a reality. Having successfully gained an A' level in sociology, she qualified for entry to a B.Ed course of teacher training. Her first essays were important challenges to her faltering academic confidence. The relationship between structural forces and her particular life history meant that she had to struggle against the

negative effects of her childhhood and marriage which had, over many years, nourished and sustained self-doubt. Set in this context, along with her existence in a society in which gender relations and gender power relations in particular, remain stubbornly unequal, it becomes possible to understand why it took Ann so long to believe that her good essay marks really were evidence of academic ability and not simply a 'glitch'. As the year went by and her performance was sustained on school experience placements, essays, assignments and examinations, she slowly began to believe she could succeed on her chosen degree course. Such is the tenuous nature of her confidence, that she could not yet deny the influences of her past and believe that she could do well and achieve the 2:1 she covertly cherished. She chose instead to play safe, aiming only to pass. The 'icing on the cake' had to wait because, for the time being, the influences of her childhood and marriage continued to play a powerful part in her identity. The contradictory nature of her academic confidence did not lessen significantly until she was nearing the final stage of the Course. By then, college tutors had joined the group of significant others who had now begun to play an increasingly important part in Ann's life and who helped her construct an alternative view of herself. The process of change in her academic confidence can thus be partly explained by the incremental stock of significant others who slowly displaced the negative effects of her mother and husband

with positive feedback of her academic and professional performance. Even then, she only admits to her desire for higher achievement in a private letter to a tutor-researcher who also happens to be her personal tutor and, on her own admission, this is to be interpreted less as 'confidence' and more as 'sticking one's neck out'. The remaining explanation lies in Ann's mixture of 'accommodation and resistance' (Anyon,1983; Mac An Ghaill, 1988) to powerful social and cultural forces which were mediated through gender-specific life experiences. A further point worthy of consideration is that whilst she had to prematurely leave the Grammar school she had attended, she would, at various points in her life, have recalled it as a place which offered educational opportunities. The fact that she did not take up the opportunity she had missed until a relatively late point in her adult life, is both an illustration of the way in which gender and structural factors combined to constrain her from an earlier application to higher education, and the degree of choice and control she had in making the decision to enter it when she did. She must therefore have carried with her into adulthood, a glimmer of academic belief in herself.

Crisis

It would appear from the study that the multiple demands of crisis combined with being a full-time student with family responsibilities, cause such acute discomfort that one way to reduce the strain is either to

abandon some of the demands by withdrawing from the course, or hasten the formation of coping strategies which will make the increased complexity of life more manageable (see chapter 6).

The crisis which faced Ann was a marital one. Some of the tensions and difficulties which she experienced in her marriage emerged early on in her first year as a student and have already been hinted at in the previous section. An initial manifestation of conflict occurred in her first term at college and concerned where, in the home, Ann did her studying. To begin with, she worked at the dining room table but, because of the difficulties she experienced in concentrating for sustained periods of time, she decided to make the spare bedroom into a study. This facility gave her the greater privacy and quietness she needed away from the hub of family activity. A strategy which worked to meet her needs did not, however, meet with her husband's approval. I asked her how helpful she had found the creation of a private space in improving her ability to concentrate:

AM I find it helpful but my husband doesn't like it very much.

DD Why is that?

AM Oh, he just makes comments like, "Oh you shut yourself up there all night," that sort of thing.

DD So he doesn't really like you being up there when he's downstairs?

AM Yes.

DD Do you think he'll get used to it?

AM He'll have to! (Outburst of laughter).

Whilst Ann's husband had given his tacit support to her taking up a course of teacher training, in reality he had expectations of it making only a minimal impact on his life. Throughout the marriage he had come to expect a range of support and help from Ann which included practical and emotional support as well as an unequal division of domestic labour which worked in his favour. His recent redundancy from reasonably well paid employment had led to a series of part-time jobs which were unsatisfying and poorly paid. His emotional dependency on Ann increased at roughly the same time as she was beginning to find rewards and satisfaction in her teacher training course. Despite the increased pressures of full-time study, Ann continued to support her husband by doing the book-keeping for a part-time job he had taken on in debt collecting. He also expected her to find time to help him complete job applications as well as spend time talking with him during the evenings. When she made it clear that she could not study at the same time as servicing the emotional needs of her family, he resented her removal to a room upstairs away from his company. Ann initially hoped that she could share her student experiences with her husband. It quickly became clear to her, however, that the emotional support she desired was not forthcoming. Her new

experience as a full-time B.Ed student was not going to bring about any change in their marital relationship which had, for many years, survived on a one-way channel of emotional and practical expenditure in which the power relations were vested in favour of her husband. Emotional commitment as an aspect of power in long-term relationships, is a significant aspect of gender relations and the part it plays in making or breaking personal relationships is seldom given the attention it merits (cf Edwards, 1993). Ann's entry into higher education reduced the emotional energy she was able to give to her husband and it became an escalating source of conflict. An extract from the diary she kept during the second term gives some idea of the comparative 'absence' of her husband from domestic activity. After she had taken her daughter to work, got breakfast, washed up and prepared dinner the diary continues with the following entries:

12.30 Arrived home (from church). Cooked dinner. Ate dinner. Washed up.
1.45 Watched TV. Olympics.
2.15 Helped Howard with job applications.
2.45 Made scones for church tea.
3.30 Went to church. Had tea.
.6.00 Took car to garage for MOT.
6.15 Arrived home. Put plug on heater. Coffee.
7.15 Watched TV with girls.
7.45 Played cards with girls.
10.00 Coffee. Talking to Howard. Loaded washing machine.
11.30 Bed. read till 12.00. (Diary entry, Ann Major, 16/2/92).

Apart from the occasional entry which refers to Howard as sharing the washing up with her, there is little mention during the entire fortnight

during which Ann kept the diary, of his involvement either with his two daughters or with Ann as a helpmate or companion. Ann does his accounting, helps him complete job applications and listens to his problems about work. There are few signs of any reciprocal emotional or practical sharing on his part.

An added problem was her husband's difficulty in accepting that because she sometimes only had to go into college for a two-hour taught session, that she then needed to study at night. He could not understand why she did not complete her work during the day when she only had one short session at college. His comment when she tried to explain the complexity of the demands of academic work, was to categorise her student life as 'easy' and a 'doddle':

> AM So on Monday and Tuesday, for example, I was only here (at college) from 3pm to 5pm. So he says, "What time are you going in today? Huh. You students, you have it so easy." And I have to keep explaining that for every hour at college I'm probably spending two hours doing something at home here or in the library. And I don't think that's really sunk in yet so he still tends to think that it's a doddle.

Describing the new demands on Ann as a student as unproblematically 'easy', gave Howard the rationale he needed to assume that life at home could go on much as before with few changes in the domestic routine. Ann, however, was determined that change in the family would take place in a way which ensured that her new role as a student-teacher

would be taken seriously. If she was to succeed in meeting the demands of the course, she either had to continue to accept the unequal power relations upon which the marriage had historically rested, or she had to withdraw some of her emotional and domestic labour. The former course of action would mean she would face a ceaseless round of demands on her time and the latter would bring conflict at home. In the end Ann steered a course between these two options and used a blend of accommodation and resistance to the domestic power relations which she had previously accepted. Her coping strategy was not to return home until well after the family had arrived home. Her argument was that if she was not there to prepare and cook the meal, somebody else would eventually take the initiative and get it. Her strategy worked and, for a while, there was very little conflict as a result. However, the 'price' to be paid for the enactment of this strategy was a bit of deception and 'cheating' on her part, which amounted to her not going home until 6pm when she could have been at home by 4.30pm. I asked her where she had spent the 'borrowed' time:

AM Well, I went to a friend's and did some reading and made notes and talked to her because she teaches anyway. So she's more sympathetic to listening to what I've been doing. By the time I've got home they've got the washing in and they've made the dinner and I've got in and the dinner's been ready and that's been super.

Not only did this strategy succeed in getting the family to make changes in her interest, it provided her with an opportunity to share her teaching

experiences with a sympathetic listener. Ann increasingly came to depend on emotional support from friends as the strains and conflicts in her marriage worsened during the year. Her husband's hostility towards her teacher training course became more overt as financial problems and low morale on his part increasingly threatened family stability. By the end of the second interview Ann was so unhappy in her marriage that she had sought help from a marriage guidance organisation. During the third interview Ann confided that the biggest problem was the fact that her husband's role as family provider had been eroded and that her entry into a fulfilling student life had reinforced his own feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction with his part-time job.

Ann needed to find a way of taking some control over the marital pressures which were beginning to overwhelm her as well as making it difficult for her to concentrate on her college studies. She therefore brought into play further coping stategies. In order to keep on top of essential household chores she paid her daughters to do some of the ironing and cleaning. She also sought emotional help from her vicar who had proved a source of strength to her when her father was dying. In addition to offering counsel and understanding of her marital difficulties, her vicar also helped her practically, by showing her how to organise her time more efficiently by suggesting that she drew up a

detailed weekly time plan of all the things she needed to do. Sticking closely to this plan gave Ann a tangible sense of achievement and a sense that she was making progress.

Another important source of support came from a student peer, Pamela Jones, who became a close friend and with whom it was possible to share family problems and difficulties. In this way they were able to help each other. Examination revision for example, was done together in each other's houses. They fed off each other, sharing differing intellectual perspectives and understandings about subject knowledge as well as enjoying drinking coffee and doing crossward puzzles together as 'rewards' for work achieved. Using the time plan idea that her vicar had given her, they drew up detailed timetables which structured the order and content of their daily revision collaboration. In this way they were able to be productive as well as sociable and both did well in the subsequent examinations.

As Ann's marital problems intensified, she increasingly separated her educational life from her family life:

AM I've sort of compartmentalised the problems. I don't think about home when I'm in college.

The notion of separating or connecting educational experience with family lives is a theme which Edwards (1993) explores at length in her study of mature women students. She argues that the women's ability to negotiate their way between the two extremes of a separating and

connecting continuum, in ways that were acceptable to them and their families, was a key factor in avoiding marital conflict. Anne's decision to compartmentalize college and home life has to be set in the context of her marital difficulties. Separating the two spheres was a conscious strategy on her part to make it possible for her to continue her rewarding life as a student and to meet the academic demands of the course, rather then to protect a relationship which was already in decline.

Ann's marriage continued to deteriorate despite eventual help from a marriage counselling agency. Increasing financial problems also exacerbated her difficulties. Two years later, after a painful and stressful period, she eventually obtained a divorce from her husband. Ann was ambivalent about how she would manage on her own as a sole parent and initially doubted her ability to lead a fulfilling life without a marriage partner. But, partly as a consequence of her marital crisis and partly as a result of her student teacher experience, she had changed in important respects and was finding a new identity. Some aspects of this emergent identity provided her with a source of strength on which she could draw in her struggle to cope with the new pressures placed upon her by marital breakdown and increasing academic demands.

Identity

In chapters 5 and 6 the theoretical framework underpinning the

concept of identity was outlined as a way of explaining shifts and changes in the women's self image as the year progressed. The development of a student teacher and an academic identity was shown to be a new and highly valued part of the women's selves, the emergence of which was an important signifier of successful student adaptation. Ann Major, like most of the other women in the study, had acquired the gendered roles of mother and wife in adult life. In many cases, these experiences had given the women considerable pleasure and fulfilment and had formed a central part of their identities. However, there came a point in their lives when they wanted to extend their horizons beyond the home. Ann's part time work in a fish and chip shop was motivated by the need for 'a bit of independence' and a job which gave her temporary respite from the ascriptions of motherhood and marriage:

> AM I only worked one evening a week to start with and that was just for a bit of independence really, for me. I didn't actually need to go to work but I was a bit fed up with looking at the same four walls and only being a wife and mother and not a person in my own right.

Ann's search for an identity which went beyond the limitations of domesticity, had its beginnings in a history which pre-dates her entry to higher education:

DD And did the chip shop give you any satisfaction apart from the independence you spoke of?

AM Yes. Yes, it did in its own way, yes. Because you'd got your own identity. I mean .....there....nobody knew you as an appendage to a family. You were yourself. So that was quite nice.

Once Ann had tasted the experience of being a 'person in (her) own right', she continued to build on this experience by seeking other work which would extend her domestic horizons into paid employment in the classroom. It is not suggested here that the mother and wife aspects of identity are diminished or atrophied in any way, but rather that the latent self reasserts itself once it finds an opportunity to express and satisfy its needs. The domestic roles therefore remained a significant part of Ann's substantial identity but her wish to find a 'self' outside of these roles gathers strength with each successive, rewarding experience. Eventually, the newly emergent or situational self is incorporated into the existing identity. Ann was at the beginning of this search for her 'own identity'. Her work in schools, and A' level study prior to her enrolment on the course, were part of a process of change and self-renewal which, once begun, achieved a momentum which she determined not to let out of her grasp, whatever obstacles fell across her path. The search for a new self could, she believed, be best achieved by becoming a teacher, an aspiration which was resurrected from her unfinished years as a grammar school pupil. In her first term as a

student-teacher, she was able to articulate some of the changes she was undergoing in her quest for an inchoate student-teacher identity. Comparing her current experiences with her employment as a classroom assistant, she commented:

> AM I was more critical of the (class) teacher than I have ever been....if I'd worked in a classroom before I've accepted that that's that teacher's way of doing things without question ..I wasn't really looking at the reasons behind why I thought that.

Ann found the transition from her experience as a mother and classroom assistant to that of student-teacher, a relatively smooth process. By the end of her first year her situational identity as trainee teacher had become incorporated into her substantial identity. I believe that the ease with which Ann made this change can be accounted for by the following factors: teaching had been a long established part of Ann's life history; Its impedence and delay could be explained solely by lack of opportunity and family economic difficulties and not as a result of ambivalence or lack of commitment on her part. She was beginning to feel restricted and constrained by domesticity and personally undermined by an unsatisfactory marriage. She therefore needed the self-fulfilment and positive identity that she believed teaching would bring her. Most importantly, the interaction of significant others in college and in schools fed her social identity with an image of herself as an effective and successful student-teacher. The close correspondence between her social and personal identity or what Ball (1972) refers to as

between her social and personal identity or what Ball (1972) refers to as 'presented self and assigned identity', assists in the process of student-teacher incorporation into her substantial identity.

Her academic confidence was considerably more problematic for reasons which have already been extensively discussed. However, by the end of the first year, Ann was beginning to admit that she had gained some belief in her academic ability. I asked her if she saw herself any differently now that she had come to the end of the first year:

> AM Yes. Probably. Its confidence mainly and there's also the fact that lots of people who knew I was coming here weren't sure how I would do academically, although they knew I would make a good teacher. Its really nice to be able to go back to them and say, "Hey look. I'm doing alright. I'm not just scraping by."

Ann inched her way towards this point in a struggle which was both painful and deeply rewarding as the above comment testifies. In order for this change to take place the significant others in her childhood and marriage had to be displaced by others who were now more significant in her student life. The more Ann felt able to believe in herself as a successful student-teacher, the more steadfastly she held on to this newly emerging self. Now that she had experienced the stirrings of a different identity, she determined to keep it. This later turned out to be a key factor in her ability to survive the disintegration of her marriage and the changes which inevitably came with it.

One of the purposes of this chapter has been to make explicit the dialectical interplay of human agency with social structure. The narration of Ann's life history in relation to student teacher socialization has served to provide a contextual and humanistic illustration of this elusive relationship. The problems and struggles which confronted Ann are shown to be strongly influenced by social and cultural forces in both her present and past life. However, her actions and behaviour showed that she was not powerless or overwhelmed by socially determined forces. She had some degree of choice and control in her life but the nature of choices available to her are mediated through gender-specific life experiences in childhood and adulthood. Ann's response to these experiences is a blend of part resistance and part accommodation to the gendered relations of family, education and domestic labour. For Ann, education became a cherished aspect of her life and her newly acquired student teacher and academic identity were key factors in enabling her to cope with an enduring marital and financial crisis. Ann's struggle to maintain her place in higher education is set in the context of some abiding and seemingly intractable problems of contemporary British society. Given this social context, her resolute determination to sustain her high profile of academic achievement is all the more remarkable given the relative deprivation of her earlier life history. She ended the first year with a strong 2.1 degree profile and

all the signs indicated that she would build steadfastly on the beginnings of a strengthening academic confidence. As Ann, herself, rightly expressed it, "I'm doing alright. I'm not just scraping by." (see appendix 1).

NOTES

(1) For a fuller discussion of this theme, see chapter 1 of the study.

(2) Because Ann Major was a mature student, the university admissions regulations allowed her to enter the B.Ed course with one A' level.

(3) A critical discussion of theories of social and cultural reproduction is given in chapter 1.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS

This has been an account of social change over one year in the lives of a group of 'ordinary' women many of whom revealed extra-ordinary qualities of resilience and tenacity in the face of some intractable and unforseen personal crises. How had women fared by the end of their first year in teacher training and what had they gained from it? They had all passed the first year examinations and school experience placement. The course had so far met their expectations, many of them having relished the academic and professional challenges it had presented as well as the demands it placed upon them to think and question taken-for-granted assumptions about schools, education and children. They were all, without exception, looking forward to their second year. However, the single, most important gain acknowledged by the women was the opportunity it had provided for them to increase their self esteem and academic confidence. Reflecting back over the year, they frequently admitted to being surprised at their success in aspects of their training which they had, initially not believed to be within their capability. Articulating their thoughts and arguing a case in seminars, writing essays and giving video-recorded presentations were among the examples given. In some cases, the women reported that

family lives had been enriched by their student experience. In others, changes to family routines had been less welcome and, in some cases, resisted; in these cases potential solutions to the amelioration of conflict at home lay either in their ability to successfully negotiate change, or the acceptance of more fundamental changes in their marital relationship of which the long term outcome might be separation and divorce (cf Pascall & Cox 1993a; Edwards, 1993). Other kinds of crises had penetrated family life in ways which impacted upon the student experience (see chapters 6 and 7). What was striking about these women was that they did not give up and withdraw. Indeed, it appeared that the more severe the crisis, the more their resolve to stay on the course, strengthened. How can this be explained and what is its relationship to student socialization?

One purpose of this study has been to show how institutional and structural features inescapably penetrated forms of student adaptation and how they, in turn, acted upon the student experience. Behind the surface features of personal, professional and academic benefits accrued throughout the year, lie a multitude of internal and interrelational changes which this investigation has sought to uncover and understand. Central to this task has been the examination of the particular adaptive and coping strategies used by the women to respond to the demands of academic and family pressures. Drawing on the studies of strategies in

educational institutions (cf Lacey, 1977; Pollard, 1985; Woods, 1990), the concept of social strategy has been a key theoretical tool in explaining and analysing social change. The antecedents, influences and constraints of the strategies employed have shown that student adaptation, whilst indicating common features of the noviciate student experience, is not homogeneous. There were marked differences in the way the women learned to become students and such differences were as much a product of structural features as they were of individual personality. One outcome of this study has been the documentation of processes of change in ways which shed further light on the complex and often intangible relationship between human agency and social structure. An example of the dialectical interplay between these two forces can be found in an examination of the reasons why those women, whose adaptive progress was hampered by critical life events, did not give way and relinquish their place on the course. One explanation lies in the personal investment they had so far expended both prior to and during the first year of the course. Related to this, and a major theme of the study, were the positive benefits of an enhanced self-esteem which were manifested in an emergent academic and student teacher identity, both of which were highly prized and coveted aspects of student socialization. At the level of self interests, this new incorporation into their existing identity, became too valuable to give

up. Another explanation is that the course provided a tangible hope for the future in terms of a secure income and satisfying career. For many women, financial solvency, after several years of debt and the lived experience of redundancy, became an urgent need which sharpened their motivation to succeed. In such cases, they had no alternative but to "screw (their) courage to the sticking-place" [1] and carry on. However, in many cases, the dogged determination of the women to ride out the storm was the result of an interaction of both biographical and structural factors.

In a study of women in higher education, gender has inevitably played an important part in understanding how they, as mature women, experienced higher education and what effect it had upon processes of socialization. Their relatively late return to education to train for teaching is, in itself, a result of their own gendered experience of schooling and the social and cultural expectations of domestic divisions of labour. However, a national commitment to widening access to higher education and a greater flexibility in institutional admissions policies, had actually opened up educational opportunities to mature women in ways which had not previously been available. From this it would be tempting to conclude that opportunity and access to higher education had begun to be realigned in favour of women. They had places in higher education; all the signs at the end of the first year

indicated they would succeed and their strong profile of personal qualities, frequently tested to its limits, ensured that they would let nothing deflect them from their chosen path. And yet, the women's relationship to higher education was often contradictory and uncertain. Whilst higher education had not, overtly discriminated against them, several factors made it difficult for the women to succeed. The grant system continued to operate an awarding formula which was based on the husband's and not the wife's earnings. Financial debt became a serious problem for at least thirteen of them: inadequate grants led to applications for student loans and when this was added to family debts, incurred as a result of redundancy or reduced working hours, the women had no alternative but to find part-time employment. For ten women, the reality of being a student was a triple workload which included part-time work during evenings and weekends, running a home and being a full-time student. In these cases, satisfactorily completing academic assignments became increasingly problematic as the time and energy left for study became reduced.

Many of them had set their sights on gaining 2:1 degrees but they lacked confidence in their academic ability, despite evidence to the contrary. In the summer term of 1995, the women in the research group received their B.Ed degree awards.[2] Sixteen of the women succeeded in achieving 2.1 degree classifications (70% of the group)

whilst the rest gained 2.2. degrees. Women's lack of confidence, compared to men in higher education institutions, has also been noted by other writers (cf Thomas, 1990; Pascall & Cox, 1993, Woodley, 1987). Some reasons for this abiding feature of women's assessment of their own ability has been explored in relation to the personal life history account of one of the women in Chapter 7. The micro case study indicated that even with considerable evidence of academic success, low levels of confidence were difficult to shift. It is small wonder that when the women *do* begin to acquire an academic identity, they actively protect and defend it. However, the larger issue of why women students lack academic confidence, requires further investigation.

The women found difficulties too in reconciling the tensions between their roles as mothers and students. They wanted to attain high academic and professional standards of achievement but not at the expense of losing time with their families. At times, the pressures were such that finding a balance which ensured the achievement of competing claims on their time, was a question of learning to live on a knife-edge of uncertainty in which the women seldom felt secure either as mothers or students. The women's relationship to higher education thus remains a gendered one. However, their determination to resist the powerful effects of low expectations and discrimination experienced in their earlier lives, by succeeding in securing a place in higher education,

is an example of their ability to take some control over the direction of their lives.

The indomitable determination of these women to succeed in the face of some formidable problems, deserves to be repaid with at least some positive educational outcomes. The majority had succeeded in fulfilling their academic and professional aspirations by the end of the course but their longer term future looks less certain. At the present time, the promise of greater 'freedom' for schools to manage their own budgets has borne some bitter fruits. Redundancies for more experienced, 'expensive' teachers, fewer new appointments, fixed-term contracts and retrenchment feature among the harsh realities of an inadequate and arbitrary system of school funding.

However, whilst the existing political orthodoxy in relation to education leaves no room for gratuitous optimism, the women have shown themselves well equipped to cope with uncertainty and crisis. Doubtless, the same creativity and resourcefulness which enabled them to construct strategies to survive their first year of teacher training, will serve them well as they seek out ways to overcome obstacles and win through.

Contribution to Sociological and Educational Knowledge

Several writers have commented on the lacuna which exists in studies of higher education (cf Acker & Warren Piper, 1984; Thomas,

1990; Pascall & Cox, 1993). There are even fewer studies which have examined the experience of women in higher educational institutions and less still of mature women. This study makes a timely contribution to the recent trickle of research interest in mature women and their relationship to higher education (cf Pascall & Cox, 1993; Edwards, 1993). Its purpose has been to offer an account of student teacher socialization which stresses the importance of biography, history, situational context and structure, to account for change. The qualitative methods used in the study have produced rich and inclusive accounts of the women's lived reality in their first year as student teachers. The value of this approach resides in its ability to penetrate the complexity of student adaptation and reveal its layered and multi-dimensional reality. The study has focused upon the interplay and interconnections between identity, gender, life course, strategies and the negotiation of change in order to be able to offer a holistic analysis of student socialization. The conceptual approach has made it possible to grasp the fine details of change which were taking place as the women learned to become student teachers. One of the criteria for a successful ethnographic account is whether it has probed beneath the surface to reveal fine distinctions of meaning which clarify what is going on (cf Geertz, 1975). Shedding light on what lay behind the strategies which the women used to manage new demands on their lives as student

teachers has been one of the outcomes of this ethnographic study of student socialization.

The concept of social strategy has been the key to understanding processes of adapation as they were experienced by the women during the year The study shows that coping strategies are constructed in a range of institutional settings and are formed by a tightly, intertwined relationship of life history, situational and structural factors. Close examination of the development of strategies used over the year revealed that whilst they possessed structural and historical determinants, they were also dynamic in the sense that the women had some control over their choice and modus operandi. However, analyses of the progressive development of strategies showed that becoming a student teacher was differentially experienced, with smoother, adaptive transitions for some and more problematic and fractured transitions for others.

The examination of the way biography and structure intersected with gender has been important in revealing the uneasy blend of struggle, contestation, guilt and success which became a daily feature of the women's lives.

Finally, the case study has taken further the considerable body of work now established on teacher identity (Ball & Goodson, 1985; Sikes, Measor & Woods, 1985; Nias, 1989 & 1993) to include an

exploration of the women's changing identities as student teachers. The emergent student teacher and academic identity were perceived as positive and highly valued new aspects of self, as well as being crucial to student teacher socialization.

The women have paid a high price in terms of financial and personal cost for their higher education. The question of whether or not the price has been too high has yet to be answered.

Directions for Future Reseach

Future research could extend the case study inquiry from one year to four years with a different cohort of mature women students in order to gain a more complete account of student teacher socialization. A detailed four-year study, would require research funding to make it a viable propostion, but it would have the potential to raise some important questions based on this study. To what extent, for example, did the strategies employed in the first year become fixed and hardened so that they became stable properties of student teacher socialization or did they continue to be refined and modified throughout subsequent years of the course? The work on identity could be extended to include the impact of subject study, a major part of the remaining three years of training, and the longer, more intensive periods of school experience. The issue of academic confidence might then become a more explicit

focus taking into account the degree classification gained by the women at the end of the course with a consideration of how far final achievements were related to earlier aspirations. What is missing from this study because of time constraints, is the perspective of tutors in relation to the mature women students. An extended study could include an examination of staff-student interactions and their influence on student adaptation.

Another extension to the first-year study would be to follow up the women for a one or two-year period after they had completed the course. The purpose of this would be to see how they had fared in teaching applications and what further changes had taken place in their lives. Some concerns about likely restrictions in career prospects during the mid to late 1990s have already been signalled, but questions relating to which women secure posts and which do not, would generate some pertinent, contemporary data about the educational job market in relation to a particularly well qualified group of applicants. A key focus for this follow-up study would be an exploration of how far the resilience and creative use of strategies demonstrated in their first year, continued to equip them for the pressures of classroom teaching or, the uncertainty of not having a teaching post.

Longitudinal studies are expensive and time-consuming but there is potential for development in the one-year study for a research project

which examined the relationship between the individual, family, structure and career in the women's lives over a proposed ten year period. Building on the issues explored by the life course perspective, a wider range of life history methods could be used to gather data about the effects of recent changes in educational legislation on their career chances and family lives. A study of this kind would provide a rich, socio-historical account of how a group of women lived through a period of unprecedented social and educational change which spanned the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The national initiatives (cf DES 1987; 1991) which encouraged mature women to apply for teacher training did not address the financial implications of full-time study. The production of national and institutional guidelines which gave a realistic indication of the expenditure which students would incur over a four-year period, would at least enable them to plan ahead on the basis of relevant information. The current laissez-faire system of grants *and* loans which places students in a dependency relationship with the institution, urgently needs reviewing by the Department for Education and Employment.

At the institutional level ways need to be found of harnessing the high levels of academic and professional motivation of mature women

students which are more parsimonious of their time and energy. The present B.Ed structure is, on the admission of management and teaching staff, too complex, over-taught and over-assessed. Students generally report that they are so burdened with diverse forms of assessment and a tightly structured timetable that they have little time to reflect or to complete work to the academic standard they would like. One of the strengths of the mature women was their ability to work independently to a high level of intellectual achievement. They excelled in assessments which enabled them to work at depth on an issue of their choice. A rigid adherence to timetabled commitments and a preponderence of written examinations drained away the time they might have spent on independent study. Given the current interest in finding alternative ways to teach and assess large numbers of students (cf Habeshaw, Gibbs & Habeshaw, 1992) it would seem a timely moment to consider replacing some of the written examinations, with modes of assessment which are more compatible with the requirements of a vocational course and the strengths of adult learners (cf Morgan, 1981; McLaren, 1985).

The adoption of a policy which took greater account of student abilities, particularly those of mature women, would have numerous positive benefits for the institution as a whole. Releasing time for a greater degree of independent study and distance learning would reduce the travel and childcare costs currently incurred by the women as a

result of the existing requirements to attend daily sessions taught at college. It would also relieve tutors from heavy teaching loads thus freeing time for research and greater individual contact with students, the current loss of which is a source of dissatisfaction for both parties. It would reduce the existing strain on teaching rooms and resources which would raise the potential for improved pedagogical practice for all students.

NOTES

(1) The exact quotation is, ... 'But screw *your* courage to the sticking place,' Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 7, W. Shakespeare.

(2) Twenty out of the twenty-three women in the study graduated. One woman failed her final school experience examination and withdrew from the course at the end of the autumn term, 1994. Two women, for financial and family reasons, decided to suspend their studies at the end of their second year (see appendix 1). One woman has since returned to the course in order to resume her training.

Appendix 1 — The Research Group:

Ann Major: Age 41; Married; 2 children. Work experience: Costs clerk; Fish and chip sales; Paid classroom assistant. Separated from husband at end of 1st year. Divorced in 2nd year. Graduated July 1995, B.Ed Hons 2:1.

Brenda Corless: Age 39; Married; 2 children. Work experience: Clerk; Dental Nurse; Playgroup organiser, parent helper. Graduated July 1995, B.Ed Hons 2:2.

Barbara Melling Age 34; Married; 1 child. Work experience: Manageress of restaurant; paid pianist and classroom assistant for children with special educational needs. Husband became bankrupt in 1st year, forced into redundancy, serious mortgage debts, house repossessed and family moved into rented accommodation. Graduated July 1995, B.Ed Hons 2:2.

Beryl King: Age 29; Married; 2 children. Work experience: Chemist dispenser; parent helper. Graduated July 1995, B.Ed Hons 2:1.

Beth Wells: Age 35; Married; 2 children. Work experience: Civil Service Clerical Officer, playgroup and parent helper. Marriage broke down at end of 4th year. Graduated July 1995, B.Ed Hons 2:1.

Carole Payne: Age 33; Married; 3 children. Work experience: Bank Clerk; Red Cross Organiser; parent helper. Husband's job moved in 2nd year, child minding arrangements became very complex. Intercalated in 2nd year with intention to return and complete course. Not yet been able to return because of family difficulties.

Christine Kift: Age 29; Married; 2 children. Work experience: Taught drama at private school; Care assistant for the elderly. Former student of Imperial College, London, left because of ill health.Graduated July 1995, B.Ed Hons 2:1.

Diane Young: Age 33; Married; 1 child. Work experience: Clerk-receptionist; Playgroup helper. Husband left her at end of first term. Financial problems forced her into part-time work at weekends and evenings. Graduated July 1995 B.Ed Hons 2:2.

Gail Prince: Age 35; Married; 2 children. Work experience: Paid school secretary and classroom assistant. Graduated July 1995, B.Ed Hons 2:1.

Geraldine Wing: Age 32; Married; 2 children. Work experience: Department manager; Nursery assistant. Both parents became ill during 1st year, one enventually dying. Became very ill herself with a low invasive lung cancer from which she slowly recovered. Graduated July 1995 B.Ed Hons 2:1.

Helen Cornwall: Age 41; Lone parent, divorced; 2 children. Work experience: Computer analyst programmer; Data Control Clerk; Paid classroom assistant. Graduated July 1995 B.Ed Hons 2:1.

Jackie Stephens: Age 24; Unmarried, has long term relationship with live in partner; 1 child. Work experience: Section Head at Sainsbury's; Sports Instructor; volunteer helper for autistic child. Intercalated at the end of 1st year because of financial difficulties and behaviour problems with her son. Has since returned to complete the B.Ed course.

Karen James: Age 39; Married; 3 children. Work experience: Accounts clerk; Postmistress; Cub leader. Graduated July 1995, B.Ed Hons 2:1.

Linda Vince: Age 39; Married; 2 children. Work experience: Accounts clerk; Playgroup and parent helper; school parent governor. Graduated July 1995, B.Ed Hons 2:1.

Lucy Patron: Age 34; Married; 2 children. Work experience; Receptionist; Playgroup supervisor; parent helper. Graduated July 1995, B.Ed Hons 2:1.

Monica Griffiths: Age 36; Married; 3 children. Work experience: Clerical officer; parent helper. Graduated July 1995, B.Ed Hons 2:1.

Marilyn Smith: Age 45; Married; 2 children. Work experience: Scientific Officer; Parent helper; PTA Secretary. Failed final school placement and withdrew from the course at the end of the Autumn term, 1994.

Mary Croft: Age 35; Married; 3 children. Work experience: British Horse Society Instructor; parent helper. Graduated July 1995, B.Ed Hons 2:1.

Pauline Cash: Age 33; Married; 2 children. Work experience: Bank Clerk; Playgroup assistant; Parent helper. Graduated July 1995, B.Ed Hons 2:1.

Pamela Jones: Age 35; Married; 2 children. Work experience: Accounts clerk; Parent helper. Both parents died during course of 1st year. Graduated July 1995, B.Ed Hons 2:1.

Pat Grade: Age 31; Married; 3 children. Work experience: School meals supervisor; Parent helper. Husband developed serious back problem during 1st year, eventually became immobile. Graduated July 1995, B.Ed Hons 2:1.

Ruth Barker: Age 34; Married; 2 children. Work experience: Laboratory Technician; Mother & Toddler Group Organiser; Sales Buyer. Father died of industrially related illness during 1st year; Ruth suffered acute distress for much of 1st year. Graduated July 1995, B.Ed Hons 2:2.

Susan Krass: Age 24; Unmarried; No children. Work experience: Creche leader; Playgroup leader; Safeways cashier. Graduated July 1995, B.Ed Hons 2:1.

Sam Eves: Age 39; Married; 2 children. Work experience: Tracer/Draughts person; Parent helper; Parent /governor. Left husband during 1st term & found herself unable to gain access to her children. Became emotionally and physically ill and withdrew from the course at the end of the Autumn term as a result of ill health.

Angela Deakin Age 27; Married; 3 children. Work experienece: Sales Assistant; Parent helper. Mother-in-law child minded her 3 very young children but became terminally ill with cancer during Angela's 1st term. She withdrew from the course at the end of the 1st term with the intention of returning once she had found help with childcare arrangements. Has not yet returned to the course.

With the exception of Susan Krass who is of Asian Indian ethnic origin, all the women in the research group are of White British origin.

Appendix 2

Interview Agenda

Interview 1 Summer Term 1991	Interview 2 Autumn Term 1991	Interview 3 Spring Term 1992	Interview 4 Summer Term 1992
Factors leading to decision to teach. Why now? Educational opportunities in previous schooling. Preparation for B.Ed. entry. Expectations of course. Becoming a student, hopes, doubts, anxieties. Perceptions of teaching profession. Changes to educational legislation. Career hopes. Permission sought to continue with interviews.	Perceptions of first day/week. Subjective feelings as a student. Relationships with other students. Expectations of course - match or mismatch? Coping strategies. Perceptions of tutors. Effects on family, changes to routines, conflict, difficulties. Academic self-confidence. Request for women to keep a diary for 10-14 days. Diary, notebook, including instructions, to be sent in post.	Issues arising from diary. First essay feedback. Academic self-confidence. Reactions to new programmes of study. Perceptions of school experience. Twin pressures of home and academic responsibility. Reference back to problems mentioned in 1st/2nd interviews. Financial, personal, family issues they would like to raise.	Examinations revision preparation. Support networks. School experience week/reactions. Tutor help. Resources - books, artefacts, money, childcare facilities. Perceptions of B.Ed. at end of year. What has course done/not done for them? Problems posed, resolved, created. Expectations of 2nd year. Articulation of current coping strategies. What has been dropped/ safeguarded?

Appendix 3 Letter of invitation to potential research group members:

date 23 April 1991 our ref DD/ira/PC/298 your ref

Dear

You have been offered a place on our B.Ed Course and I very much look forward to seeing you in September. I am writing to you in the hope that you would be interested in taking part in a research study on mature students which I am about to embark upon for my Ph.D thesis. I am particularly interested in how mature students adjust to the student role and what their expectations, anxieties and hopes of a four year teacher training course might be. I would like to work with a group of 25 mature B.Ed students who represent, as far as possible, a spread of age groups, occupational background, B.Ed entry route and those with and without family commitments.

The study will take place over a year, between September 1991 and July 1992. During this time I want to study the group as they go through the various key learning experiences of the first year - from the submission of the first essay to the end of year examinations and the one week's teaching experience in the summer term. I would very much appreciate it if you would agree to be part of the group.

If you are agreeable I would like to interview you either in your home or in College at some point between May and July, 1991. The purpose of the interview would be to discuss your perceptions and views about teaching as a career, how these may relate to your previous career/work/life experience and what your expectations of the course are. All material will be treated confidentially.

If you would be willing to be interviewed would you kindly complete the detachable slip below and return it as soon as possible in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope.

My very best wishes for a successful and rewarding teacher training course.

Yours sincerely, Diane M Duncan

I would / would not be willing to be interviewed.*
I would like the interview to take place in my home / in College.*
* (Please delete whichever is inapplicable).
Name in full including your preferred title (Mrs, Miss, Ms).

Address:

Telephone Number. Daytime: Evening:

PLEASE RETURN TO: DIANE DUNCAN,
(Please use t

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If you have any difficulty in obtaining the ab

Appendix 4: 1st Year School Experience Policy Statement; Extracts from School Based Activities Booklet:

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE - SPRING & SUMMER TERMS B.ED POLICY STATEMENT FOR 1st YEAR STUDENTS

NOTE: The copy of this document sent to school is for you to retain in your school files. The student will also bring a copy to school which the class teacher should sign and this document will then be kept at the **FRONT** of the student's School Experience file for reference by the teachers.

This document is intended to clarify the College expectations in relation to the work of the students and their supervision by class and/or team teachers and College tutors.

Spring Term: Monday & Tuesday, Jan. 16th and 17th;
Wednesday, Thursday, Feb. 18th and 19th;
Wednesday & Thursday, March 1st and 2nd.

Summer Term: Tuesday, May 9th;
Wednesday, May 17th;
Monday to Friday, May 22nd to 26th.

Foundation Studies work occupies most of the first year of the four year B.Ed degree course through a College-based programme closely linked with associated work undertaken in schools. Students complete twenty days of school based activity spread over three terms. Students have worked in one school in the Autumn term which was not their intended age phase choice. They are now placed in a different school with children of their intended age phase choice for the Spring and Summer terms.

AIMS

The work in schools this term should enable students to practise the skills of observation; to collect information, to promote and illlustrate the College-based programme related to primary schools and the curriculum, and increasingly to provide experiences of working directly with children.

ACTIVITIES

In the **Spring** term students will be completing the activities related to the different areas of the curriculum. Some of these require gathering information directly from teachers whilst others are specifically based upon making direct observations or through working with children. The timing of these activities is flexible to accommodate to the school/class organisation but should not take more than a quarter of the time spent in school.

Students have been informed that any information will be treated in confidence and with professional responsibility. Further, they have been told to avoid 'overwhelming' busy teachers with questions and have been guided in relation to appropriate professional conduct.

In the **SUMMER** term students return to the same class to make two day visits in preparation for their 'mini-block' work.

On the first preliminary visit they should decide with the class teacher a suitable topic to explore. The topic chosen may well be one which is integral to the on-going work of the class.

Students will draw up an overall plan for this work to discuss with their teacher on the second day visit. A detailed plan for each day's session(s) should be available in the student's file at the beginning of each day, so that they may be seen by the teacher if required.

During this period of working in schools students are expected to take responsibility for planning, preparing and managing the activities of a small group of children for at least one hour on each day. This period of time may occur in one block or be spread throughout the day, eg. half-hour in the morning and half-hour in the afternoon. They should also gain some experience of telling a story to the whole class.

Further details of the work they have to undertake is in the school-based activities booklet of which each student has a copy which teachers can refer to at any time.

SUPERVISION

During the mini-block a tutor will arrange a visit to coincide whenever possible with a time when students should actually be teaching. Teachers and/or headteachers shouldn't hesitate to contact us if they have any queries or if any problems arise.

ASSESSMENT

A profile sheet will be brought to school by the student prior to the mini-block and should, if at all possible, be completed and returned via the studnent on their final day in school.

In order to ensure the individual teachers concerned have seen this document we would kindly ask them to sign the following section.

I am/we are willing and able to allow the student to fulfil the expectations outlined above. Any difficulties or special arrangements will be discussed with the student and/or the College Tutor.

CLASS TEACHER: .....

and/or **TEAM LEADER:** .....

SCHOOL PLACEMENTS TUTOR

Extract From School Based Activities Booklet:

General Information, Policies and Administrative Details

a. General Information

Foundation Studies work occupies most of the first lyear of the B.Ed degree course. Through a College-based programme and the associated work undertaken in schools, it enables students to identify and analyse the main features of primary schooling. The development of an informed, critical, reflective attitude to the primary curriculum is a vital part of the this work.

Students will also begin their professional training through a programme of work introducing them to the different curricular areas. Curriculum workshops will introduce them to the notion of curricular integration and will serve as a source of ideas for work with children in schools.

A programme of twenty days of school-based activity is planned in conjunction with college-based work. This school experience is spread over the three terms of the first year and will create an opportunity for students to get direct experience of two different schools during this time. Students will have the opportunity of visiting schools on different days of the week in order to see the range of curricular activities.

There are three purposes underlying the school based activity:

(1) to afford students opportunities to practice the skills of observation,

(2) to enable the collection of information and materials to promote and illustrate college work,

(3) to give students experience of working directly with children in order to confirm their potential for teaching.

In the latter case it is important to distinguish between direct, planned experience where students prepare a specific task to work on with children in small groups or as individuals, and general 'caught' experience where students are providing "another pair of hands" in the classroom. Both forms of experience are to be encouraged within a balanced programme of school based activity.
There will be an emphasis on observation work in the Autumn Term with a gradual shift towards increasing the students' direct participation in planning for and teaching small groups under the supervision of the class teacher in the Spring Term. This will provide a basis for the full week of school experience in late May.

b. General Policies

(1) Each seminar group is associated with a group of primary schools. Group tutors will negotiate the specific placecment of

students within individual schools. Individual students will not make their own approaches to schools under any circumstances.

(2) It is not normal for students to follow organised school experience in schools where their own children attend, or are likely to attend, and students are asked to draw the attention of their tutors to any circumstances which relate them to a particular school in our area.

(3) An attempt will be made to provide students with an opportunity to establish a relationship with teachers, and have a range of experiences, though these are competing interests and it is recognised that an effective balance between them may be difficult to achieve.

c. Professional Responsibilities

Students are expected to demonstrate an appropriate professional conduct whilst in school. They are expected to be in school half an hour before the start of the and at the end of the school day. However, it is recognised that College transport arrangements may sometimes affect this. Students should always contact their supervising tutor or the School of Education School Experience Placement Tutor if they have any problems relating to school experience responsibilities.

1. Dress

Students are asked to remember that they are preparing for a professional career and their mode of dress should be suitable in this context. In this matter they should be guided by the wishes of the Headteacher or the school in which they have been placed.

2. Travel

Travel expenses are based on a single round trip per day by bus or car Monday to Friday. Students who wish to claim for a second round trip on a given day (eg for an evening meeting) or for travelling to schools on a Saturday or Sunday, must have received prior permission.

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